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## Shoplifting among university students: a case study of University of Botswana

### Abstract

This paper examines the shoplifting behavior of a stratified sample of 248 students of the University of Botswana. The paper reveals that 35% of the students have shoplifted at least once in their life time, 18% percent have shoplifted within the past 6 months and majority of the shoplifters are from families with parental incomes greater than US\$ 1000.00. Although the students see shoplifting as wrong, evil, as a practice that can force retail stores out of business and a misbehavior that can cause price increases in retail business, yet they are unable to curb this misbehavior. The paper, therefore recommends the development of students' educational programs and orientations aimed at creating awareness of the students that shoplifting is a serious crime. The involvement of parents and peer models will be crucial in this program.

### Introduction

Shoplifting in the society is one of those crimes that is hardly visible as a crime yet it has serious impact on retail businesses in Botswana (Ifezue, 2008). The range of culprits of this crime cuts across all ages but predominantly among the adolescents. The University of Botswana houses a number of retail businesses and hardly anyone has studied the extent of this crime within these or other retail businesses.

The present study explored the level of involvement of a stratified sample of 248 students of the University of Botswana in shoplifting activities, their motivation to shoplift and the prevailing situations that facilitate or impede the students to shoplift. The results of this study will inform policy on appropriate interventions to check this moral behavior and assist the shop owners in developing appropriate measures to check the perpetrators of this crime.

### 1. Background

A number of studies have shown that a substantial proportion of the shoplifting is carried out by adolescents (Tonglet, 2006; Guffey et al., 1979; Moschis et al., 1987). Roughly 40 percent of apprehended shoplifters are reported to be adolescents (Baumer and Rosenbaum, 1984), and anonymous self-report studies (e.g., Klemke, 1982) also indicate widespread shoplifting among adolescents. The literature on shoplifting behavior shows that it is likely to be influenced by economic factors, peer pressure, moral attitudes and perceptions of low apprehension risks (Cox et al., 1990; Ray, 1987; Verill, 1978; Stores, 1971). Explanations for this particular aspect of deviant behavior are sought in theories of developmental psychology and sociological models of human behavior which are integrated into a broader socialization perspective.

Studies have also shown that as many as 60 percent of consumers have shoplifted at some time in their lives (Klemke, 1982; Kraut, 1976) and that more than 200 million shoplifting incidents occur annually (Baumer and Rosenbaum, 1984). While a few shoplifters are professional thieves (see, e.g., Klokis, 1985), the vast majority seem to be amateurs in that their activity is sporadic; they typically have no known history of criminal activity, and they steal for their own consumption rather than for resale (Baumer and Rosenbaum, 1984; Cameron, 1964).

Shoplifting is an undesirable activity which has become a growing concern not only among retailers but also among consumer educators, governments and social scientists. In the United States it has become the largest monetary crime, accounting for up to 7.5 percent of dollar sales (Messenger, 1975) and over \$16 billion annually (Forbes, 1981), and it is on the rise (Velocci, 1978). How this affects retail market in Botswana is not very clear. This study which has been designed as a pilot study for an oncoming national study on shoplifting among adolescents in Botswana examined how adolescent student shoplifters at the University Botswana differ from their non-shoplifting counterparts. The study explored the reasons why the University students shoplift; the demographic characteristics of the shoplifting and non-shoplifting students; what items are most likely shoplifted; whether shoplifting is an isolated phenomenon or part of a pattern of adolescent misbehavior and how this behavior is affected by some social and demographic characteristics of the students and their parents.

### 2. Youth and risk taking behavior

Risk taking behavior is a major contributing cause for injury, particularly among male adolescents. A report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare entitled Australia's Young People – their Health and Wellbeing 1999 stated that more than two thirds of

deaths in young people were attributable to some form of injury, including accidents and suicide (ISBN 978 1 74024 028 4; Cat. PHE 19; 278 pp., available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publicationdetail/?id=6442467120>).

Shoplifting, like other types of crimes, arises from the interaction between an individual with a certain potential for offending, and the environment or situation, which provides opportunities for offending. It is plausible to suggest that the individual potential for offending, or antisocial tendency, depends on energizing, directing and inhibiting processes.

Some of the reasons that young people have given for taking risks include: peer group pressure; impressing friends and wanting to be accepted; going along with the crowd and not wanting to be left out; sense of invincibility and don't feel they can say no or speak up when they are in a risky situation (<http://www.tacsafety.com.au/jsp/content/NavigationController.do?areaID=13&tierID=2&navID=5CF5918F7F000001008BD6860747371E&navLink=null&pageID=345>).

### 3. Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study was informed by the desire to capture all the age groups within the student population. A sample size calculator gave an appropriate sample size for the study at 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error as 367 (The Creative Survey Systems, 2010).

Two faculties, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Business were randomly selected for the study from the seven faculties in the University of Botswana. From each of the selected faculty, one class of each year (year 1, 2, 3 and 4 for each faculty) was selected for the study. The statistically selected sample size was proportionately allocated to the sampled classes and the questionnaire administered on the sampled students. Trained research assistants explained the purpose of the study to the sampled students and reminded them that there were neither financial reward for participation nor were they under any compulsion to participate in the study. In addition

they were informed that the responses will be confidential and questionnaire was anonymous and responses will not be used for any other purpose except the academic exercise for which it is meant. Where it was impossible for the selected students to complete the questionnaire in class, they were self administered. A total of 248 students completed the questionnaire giving a response rate of 68%. This response rate is twice that of Tonglet (2001) for consumers and slightly lower than those for the school survey.

The questionnaire solicited responses on demographic characteristics of students, frequency of shoplifting behavior, motivation to shoplift, shoplifting behavior and attitude towards shoplifting, factors that encourage shoplifting, attitudes toward shoplifting deterrents to measure students' perception of the effectiveness of these deterrents, attitudes toward economic impact of shoplifting and the students' beliefs about shoplifting

### 4. Results

The results of the analyses show that 67.3% of the sampled students were females while 32.7% were males. Majority of the sampled students (78.6%) were between ages 19 and 25, while 16.9% were between 26 and 32 years. Only 2.8% were 33 years and over. Parents of the majority of the students (48%) earned monthly income of above P7000.00 (or US\$1000.00) while parents of about one in every four students earned below P3000.00 (or US \$430.00) monthly. About 17% of the students did not know their parents' monthly income (Table 1).

A further classification of the respondents by their shoplifting traits shows that of those who never shoplifted, 75.2% were females while 24.8% were male. Of the students who had shoplifted 52.9% were females while 47.1% were males. The majority of the students who have either never shoplifted (81.4%) or had shoplifted (73.6%) were between 19 and 25 years. The parents of the majority of the sampled students who had either never shoplifted (49.7%) or shoplifted (44.8%) earned monthly income of over P7 000.00 (or equivalently over US \$1000.00).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sampled students by their shoplifting traits

| Demographic characteristics |        | Ever shoplifted          |                        | Total |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|
|                             |        | Never shoplifted (n=161) | Have shoplifted (n=87) |       |
| Gender                      | Male   | 40                       | 41                     | 81    |
|                             |        | 24.8%                    | 47.1%                  | 32.7% |
|                             | Female | 121                      | 46                     | 167   |
|                             |        | 75.2%                    | 52.9%                  | 67.3% |

Table 1 (cont.). Demographic characteristics of the sampled students by their shoplifting traits

| Demographic characteristics |                 | Ever shoplifted          |                        | Total  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------|
|                             |                 | Never shoplifted (n=161) | Have shoplifted (n=87) |        |
| Age                         | 12-18           | 1                        | 3                      | 4      |
|                             |                 | 0.6%                     | 3.4%                   | 1.6%   |
|                             | 19-25           | 131                      | 64                     | 195    |
|                             |                 | 81.4%                    | 73.6%                  | 78.6%  |
|                             | 26-32           | 24                       | 18                     | 42     |
|                             |                 | 14.9%                    | 20.7%                  | 16.9%  |
|                             | 33 and above    | 5                        | 2                      | 7      |
|                             |                 | 3.1%                     | 2.3%                   | 2.8%   |
| Parent's income per month   | Under P3000     | 29                       | 28                     | 57     |
|                             |                 | 18.0%                    | 32.2%                  | 23.0%  |
|                             | P3000-5000      | 13                       | 3                      | 16     |
|                             |                 | 8.1%                     | 3.4%                   | 6.5%   |
|                             | P5100-7000      | 8                        | 5                      | 13     |
|                             |                 | 5.0%                     | 5.7%                   | 5.2%   |
|                             | P7001 and above | 80                       | 39                     | 119    |
|                             |                 | 49.7%                    | 44.8%                  | 48.0%  |
|                             | Not indicated   | 31                       | 12                     | 43     |
|                             |                 | 19.30%                   | 13.80%                 | 17.30% |
| Total                       |                 | 161                      | 87                     | 248    |
|                             |                 | 100.0%                   | 100.0%                 | 100.0% |

**5. Shoplifting history of the sampled students**

The shoplifting history of the sampled students is shown in Table 2. The table shows that of the sampled students who had shoplifted, majority (72.5%) of them shoplifted over a year ago while 18.4% shoplifted recently (less than 6 months ago) and 8% shoplifted a year ago. The results also show that

while majority of the sampled students (65%) have never shoplifted, while a substantial percentage (35%) had actually shoplifted. In addition, there are no significant differences in proportion of shoplifters and non shoplifters within the gender categories ( $p > 0.05$ ). Of those who had shoplifted, 19% shoplifted once while 16% shoplifted more than once.

Table 2. The shoplifting characteristics of the sampled students

| Shoplifting characteristics |        | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Recently                    |        | 16        | 18.4    |
| 6 months ago                |        | 1         | 1.1     |
| 12 months ago               |        | 7         | 8.0     |
| A long time ago             |        | 63        | 72.5    |
| Total                       |        | 87        | 100.0   |
| Ever shoplifted             | Gender |           | Total   |
|                             | Male   | Female    |         |
| Never shoplifted            | 40     | 121       | 161     |
|                             | 49%    | 73%       | 65%     |
| Have shoplifted             | 41     | 46        | 87      |
|                             | 51%    | 28%       | 35%     |
| Total                       | 81     | 167       | 248     |
|                             | 100%   | 100%      | 100%    |

When the demographic characteristics of the shoplifters are cross tabulated by their shoplifting history, the results show that the recent shoplifters were 50% males and 50% females; 57% of those who shoplifted 12 months ago were males while 43% were females; and the greater percentage of

the long time ago shoplifters (56%) were females. Recently and long time ago shoplifters were mostly students between age 19 and 25 years. The shoplifters were predominantly from parents with monthly income greater than P7000.00 (about US \$1000.00).

Table 3. Shoplifting characteristics of shoppers by their demographic history

| Demographic characteristics |                 | How long ago you shopped (n = 87) |                      |                       |                          | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------|
|                             |                 | Recently (n = 16)                 | 6 months ago (n = 1) | 12 months ago (n = 7) | A long time ago (n = 63) |       |
| Gender                      | Male            | 50%                               | 100%                 | 57%                   | 44%                      | 47%   |
|                             | Female          | 50%                               | –                    | 43%                   | 56%                      | 53%   |
| Total                       |                 | 100%                              | 100%                 | 100%                  | 100%                     | 100%  |
| Age                         | 12-18           | –                                 | –                    | –                     | 5%                       | 3%    |
|                             | 19-25           | 69%                               | –                    | 100%                  | 73%                      | 74%   |
|                             | 26-32           | 25%                               | 100%                 | –                     | 21%                      | 21%   |
|                             | 33 and above    | 6%                                | –                    | –                     | 2%                       | 2%    |
| Total                       |                 | 100%                              | 100%                 | 100%                  | 100%                     | 100%  |
| Parent's income per month   | Under P3000     | 31%                               | 100%                 | 14%                   | 32%                      | 31%   |
|                             | P3000-5000      | –                                 | –                    | –                     | 5%                       | 3%    |
|                             | P5100-7000      | 6%                                | –                    | 14%                   | 5%                       | 6%    |
|                             | P7001 and above | 50%                               | –                    | 57%                   | 44%                      | 46%   |
|                             | Not indicated   | 13%                               | –                    | 14%                   | 14%                      | 14%   |
| Total                       |                 | 100%                              | 100%                 | 100%                  | 100%                     | 100%  |

**6. Factors influencing shoplifting versus shoplifting intentions**

A logistic regression analysis was carried out to determine the nature and strength of relationship between shoplifting intentions (shoplifted and never shoplifted) as dependent variable and the factors that affect shoplifting. The results are shown in Table 4. The table shows that financial problem is significantly negatively correlated ( $p < 0.01$ ) with shoplifting while feeling of overcharging consumers by shop owners is significantly positively correlated ( $p < 0.01$ ) with shoplifting. Other factors such as adversity, peer pressure, moral decline, open display

on counters and perception of low apprehension risks are negatively correlated with intention to shoplift. On the other hand, the factors that are positively correlated with intention to shoplift are: no one is seriously watching, and lack of control for inadequate procedures to minimize the risk of theft. In addition, the results show that students are 1.3 times more likely to shoplift because they feel that no one is seriously watching; about three times more likely to shoplift because they feel that consumers are being overcharged by shop owners and about 1.7 times more likely to shoplift because of lack of control for inadequate procedures to minimize the risk of theft.

Table 4. Logistic regression analysis of shoplifting factors

| Motives for shoplifting   | Variables in the equation |       |       |    |       |        |
|---|---------------------------|-------|-------|----|-------|--------|
|   | B                         | S.E.  | Wald  | df | Sig.  | Exp(B) |
| Adversity   | -0.37                     | 0.561 | 0.434 | 1  | 0.51  | 0.691  |
| Financial problem   | -0.934                    | 0.334 | 7.812 | 1  | 0.005 | 0.393  |
| No one is serious watching  | 0.278                     | 0.323 | 0.742 | 1  | 0.389 | 1.32   |
| Temptation of self-service  | -0.249                    | 0.32  | 0.608 | 1  | 0.436 | 0.779  |
| Open display on counters  | -0.317                    | 0.408 | 0.603 | 1  | 0.437 | 0.729  |
| Rebellion   | -0.243                    | 0.323 | 0.565 | 1  | 0.452 | 0.785  |
| Moral decline   | -0.674                    | 0.358 | 3.546 | 1  | 0.06  | 0.51   |
| Perception of low apprehension risks                                    | -0.077                    | 0.387 | 0.039 | 1  | 0.843 | 0.926  |
| Feeling of overcharging consumers by shop owners                        | 1.152                     | 0.38  | 9.174 | 1  | 0.002 | 3.164  |
| Peer pressure   | -0.472                    | 0.311 | 2.303 | 1  | 0.129 | 0.624  |
| Ignorance of the varied ways that maybe consummated                     | -0.164                    | 0.743 | 0.049 | 1  | 0.825 | 0.848  |
| Lack of control for inadequate procedures to minimize the risk of theft | 0.503                     | 0.541 | 0.863 | 1  | 0.353 | 1.654  |
| Constant  | 0.381                     | 0.39  | 0.954 | 1  | 0.329 | 1.464  |

Table 5 shows a binary logistic regression model for prediction of shoplifting intention with “Have shoplifted” as the reference category. The model shows that all the levels of the demographic variables are positively correlated with intention to shoplift. Females are about 2.6 times more likely to shoplift than males. Similarly students who are aged 19-25

years are 5.3 times more likely to have shoplifted than those aged 12-18 years while the 33 years and above are 7.2 times more likely to have shoplifted. Students whose parental monthly income is more than P5000.00 are more likely to shoplift than students than those whose parents earn monthly income between P 3000.00 and P5000.00.

Table 5. Relationship between ever shoplifted and demographic variables (reference: have shoplifted)

| Variable in equation | B      | S.E.  | Wald   | df | Sig. | Exp(B) |
|----------------------|--------|-------|--------|----|------|--------|
| Female               | .948   | .294  | 10.364 | 1  | .001 | 2.580  |
| Age                  | –      | –     | 2.078  | 3  | .556 | –      |
| 19-25                | 1.662  | 1.212 | 1.882  | 1  | .170 | 5.270  |
| 26-32                | 1.553  | 1.248 | 1.549  | 1  | .213 | 4.726  |
| 33 and above         | 1.974  | 1.499 | 1.734  | 1  | .188 | 7.197  |
| Income               | –      | –     | 6.539  | 4  | .162 | –      |
| P 3000-5000          | 1.317  | .707  | 3.474  | 1  | .062 | 3.733  |
| P 5100-7000          | .446   | .647  | .476   | 1  | .490 | 1.563  |
| P 7100 and above     | .650   | .343  | 3.596  | 1  | .058 | 1.916  |
| Not indicated        | .883   | .447  | 3.894  | 1  | .048 | 2.418  |
| Constant             | -2.175 | 1.248 | 3.038  | 1  | .081 | .114   |

**7. Students’ perception of shoplifting offenders**

It is important for a good understanding of how those who shoplift perceive the act for appropriate security and moral training. The shoplifters were then requested to indicate their perception of the act of shoplifting. The results which are displayed in Table 6 show that majority of recent shoplifters (62.5%), those who shoplifted 6 months ago (100%), 12 months ago (71.4%) and a long time ago

(63.9%) agreed that they are not thieves. An equally very high proportion of these categories of shoplifters do not view their activity as crime against business but rather justify their activities as a way of paying back the business owners for high charges on items sold to customers while at the same time not paying their workers well. A little over half of the recent, 6 month ago, 12 month ago and a long time ago shoplifters perceive shoplifting as a game.

Table 6. Shoplifters’ perception of shoplifting

| Shoplifters' perception of shoplifting  |          | How long ago you shoplifted |              |               |                 | Total |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
|   |          | Recently                    | 6 months ago | 12 months ago | A long time ago |       |
| Shoplifting offenders do not perceive themselves as thieves   | Disagree | 5                           | 0            | 1             | 12              | 18    |
|   |          | 31.3%                       | 0.0%         | 14.3%         | 19.7%           | 21.2% |
|   | Neutral  | 1                           | 0            | 1             | 10              | 12    |
|   |          | 6.3%                        | 0.0%         | 14.3%         | 16.4%           | 14.1% |
| Agree   | 10       | 1                           | 5            | 39            | 55              |       |
|   | 62.5%    | 100%                        | 71.4%        | 63.9%         | 64.7%           |       |
| They do not view their activity as real crime against business  | Disagree | 5                           | 0            | 1             | 10              | 16    |
|   |          | 31.3%                       | 0.0%         | 14.3%         | 16.1%           | 18.6% |
|   | Neutral  | 3                           | 0            | 1             | 8               | 12    |
|   |          | 18.8%                       | 0.0%         | 14.3%         | 12.9%           | 14.0% |
|   | Agree    | 8                           | 1            | 5             | 44              | 58    |
|   |          | 50.0%                       | 100%         | 71.4%         | 71.0%           | 67.4% |
| They see their activity as justified consumers because retailers often overcharge while underpaying their workers | Disagree | 0                           | 0            | 4             | 17              | 21    |
|   |          | 0.0%                        | 0.0%         | 57.1%         | 27.9%           | 24.7% |
|   | Neutral  | 4                           | 0            | 0             | 21              | 25    |
|   |          | 25.0%                       | 0.0%         | 0.0%          | 34.4%           | 29.4% |
|   | Agree    | 12                          | 1            | 3             | 23              | 39    |
|   |          | 75.0%                       | 100%         | 42.9%         | 37.7%           | 45.9% |
| They see the activity as a game   | Disagree | 4                           | 0            | 2             | 18              | 24    |
|   |          | 25.0%                       | 0.0%         | 28.6%         | 29.5%           | 28.2% |
|   | Neutral  | 4                           | 0            | 1             | 12              | 17    |
|   |          | 25.0%                       | 0.0%         | 14.3%         | 19.7%           | 20.0% |
|   | Agree    | 8                           | 1            | 4             | 31              | 44    |
|   |          | 50.0%                       | 100%         | 57.1%         | 50.8%           | 51.8% |
| Total   | 16       | 1                           | 7            | 61            | 85              |       |
|   | 100.0%   | 100%                        | 100%         | 100%          | 100%            |       |

### 8. Items mostly shoplifted

We observe that items shoplifted are a function of the environment and therefore requested the student shoplifter to indicate the type of items that are mostly shoplifted. Logistic regression analysis with shoplifting intension (shoplifter or non-shoplifter) as dependent variable was fitted to the data (Table 7).

The results show that students are about 1.8 times, 1.4 times, 1.2 times, 2.5 times, 3.7 times, 3 times, 1.7 times and twice more likely to shoplift sweet/chocolates/biscuit, food stuffs, toiletries, toys, underwear, shoes, condoms, and drinks, respectively. Decisions to shoplift small items/non-food products and jewelries are significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) negatively correlated with shoplifting intentions.

Table 7. Logistic regression to determine mostly shoplifted items

| Items likely to be shoplifted   | Variables in the equation |       |       |    |       |              |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|----|-------|--------------|
|                                 | B                         | S.E.  | Wald  | df | Sig.  | Exp(B)       |
| Cell phone                      | -0.196                    | 0.617 | 0.101 | 1  | 0.751 | 0.822        |
| Clothes                         | -0.246                    | 0.339 | 0.525 | 1  | 0.469 | 0.782        |
| Deodorant/perfumes              | -1.033                    | 0.62  | 2.777 | 1  | 0.096 | 0.356        |
| Cigarette                       | -0.842                    | 1.289 | 0.426 | 1  | 0.514 | 0.431        |
| Sweet/chocolates/biscuit        | 0.568                     | 0.336 | 2.861 | 1  | 0.091 | <b>1.765</b> |
| Electronics gadgets/accessories | -0.206                    | 0.497 | 0.171 | 1  | 0.679 | 0.814        |
| Foodstuffs                      | 0.323                     | 0.338 | 0.914 | 1  | 0.339 | <b>1.382</b> |
| Toiletry                        | 0.156                     | 0.692 | 0.051 | 1  | 0.821 | <b>1.169</b> |
| Jewelry                         | -1.486                    | 0.591 | 6.327 | 1  | 0.012 | 0.226        |
| Small items/non-food products   | -1.21                     | 0.547 | 4.899 | 1  | 0.027 | 0.298        |
| Toys                            | 0.908                     | 0.764 | 1.413 | 1  | 0.235 | <b>2.48</b>  |
| Underwear                       | 1.301                     | 0.826 | 2.485 | 1  | 0.115 | <b>3.674</b> |
| Cosmetics/hairs                 | -0.098                    | 0.688 | 0.02  | 1  | 0.887 | 0.907        |
| Shoes                           | 1.129                     | 0.765 | 2.176 | 1  | 0.14  | <b>3.092</b> |
| Stationery                      | 0.078                     | 1.552 | 0.003 | 1  | 0.96  | 1.081        |
| Condoms                         | 0.504                     | 1.682 | 0.09  | 1  | 0.764 | <b>1.656</b> |
| Drinks                          | 0.704                     | 1.113 | 0.4   | 1  | 0.527 | <b>2.023</b> |
| Constant                        | -0.573                    | 0.362 | 2.498 | 1  | 0.114 | 0.564        |

### 9. Beliefs about shoplifting

Almost half of the never shoplifted students and 27.4% of those who have shoplifted believe that shoplifting is wrong; 11% of either groups believe it

is a crime, between 14% and 16% believe it is an evil. Close to 20% of the shoplifters believe that shoplifting is a way of life and not actually bad while 16.4% of them believe that it is just a game arising from peer pressure (Table 8).

Table 8. Students beliefs about shoplifting

| Beliefs about shoplifting         | Shoplifted       |                 | Total |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|
|                                   | Never shoplifted | Have shoplifted |       |
| Crime                             | 16               | 8               | 24    |
|                                   | 11.4%            | 11.0%           | 11.3% |
| Illegal /punishable               | 19               | 10              | 29    |
|                                   | 13.6%            | 13.7%           | 13.6% |
| Wrong                             | 69               | 20              | 89    |
|                                   | 49.3%            | 27.4%           | 41.8% |
| Evil                              | 22               | 10              | 32    |
|                                   | 15.7%            | 13.7%           | 15.0% |
| Act of selfishness                | 0                | 2               | 2     |
|                                   | 0.0%             | 2.7%            | 0.9%  |
| Just a game/ peer pressure        | 20               | 12              | 32    |
|                                   | 14.3%            | 16.4%           | 15.0% |
| Caused by lack of finance/poverty | 13               | 5               | 18    |
|                                   | 9.3%             | 6.8%            | 8.5%  |
| Addictive                         | 9                | 2               | 11    |
|                                   | 6.4%             | 2.7%            | 5.2%  |
| Way of life/not bad               | 8                | 14              | 22    |
|                                   | 5.7%             | 19.2%           | 10.3% |

Table 8 (cont.). Students beliefs about shoplifting

| Beliefs about shoplifting                       | Shoplifted       |                 | Total |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-------|
|   | Never shoplifted | Have shoplifted |       |
| Greediness/rebellion                            | 7                | 2               | 9     |
|   | 5.00%            | 2.70%           | 4.20% |
| Seeking attention                               | 0                | 1               | 1     |
|   | 0.0%             | 1.4%            | 0.5%  |
| When run out of option                          | 7                | 8               | 15    |
|   | 5.0%             | 11.0%           | 7.0%  |
| Revenge against the high prices                 | 2                | 4               | 6     |
|   | 1.40%            | 5.50%           | 2.80% |
| It is done as a result of absence of monitoring | 1                | 0               | 1     |
|   | 0.7%             | 0.0%            | 0.5%  |
| Is a voluntary choice an individual has made    | 1                | 0               | 1     |
|   | 0.7%             | 0.0%            | 0.5%  |
| Total   | 140              | 73              | 213   |

Table 9. Respondents’ perception on deterrent to shoplifting

| Deterrents to engaging in shoplifting                 | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Not indicated |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| Parent's teaching their children not to shoplift      | 8%                | 6%       | 34%   | 51%            | 2%            |
| Effectiveness of sales clerks                         | 4%                | 16%      | 36%   | 42%            | 2%            |
| Effectiveness of store security staff                 | 4%                | 6%       | 16%   | 73%            | 2%            |
| Legal consequences – discouragement from present laws | 7%                | 8%       | 26%   | 56%            | 3%            |

Effectiveness of store security staff and parents teaching their children not to indulge in shoplifting were the most highly rated factors deterring students from shoplifting. The percentages of the students who either agreed or strongly agreed to this view were respectively 89% and 85%. This was followed by the legal consequences of this act (82%). On the moral of shoplifting, close to 60% of the respondents acknowledge that they will be caught if they attempted to shoplift while 70% felt strongly that being caught shoplifting is bad (Table 9).

Table 10. Respondents’ belief about shoplifting and its impact on retail business

| Do you agree that shoplifting can force a retail store out of business? | Ever shoplifted  |                 | Total |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-------|
|   | Never shoplifted | Have shoplifted |       |
| Yes   | 132              | 54              | 186   |
|   | 82%              | 62%             | 75%   |
| No  | 29               | 31              | 60    |
|   | 18%              | 36%             | 24%   |
| Not indicated   | 0                | 2               | 2     |
|   | 0%               | 2%              | 0.8%  |
| Total   | 161              | 87              | 248   |
|   | 100%             | 100%            | 100%  |

Table 10 shows the opinion of shoplifters and non shoplifters on the impact of shoplifting on retail businesses. The students were asked to state, in their opinion, whether shoplifting can force retail store out of business. The results show that 75% of the sampled students agree that shoplifting can have a negative effect on a retail store forcing it out of business. In addition 62% of shoplifters and 82% of non shoplifters share the same view. The large proportion of shoplifters (35.6%) who do not believe that their behavior has negative consequences on retail shops is supportive of the contention that shoplifters do not see their acts as crime.

On whether shoplifting can force a business to increase its prices in a deliberate bid to recover revenue lost to shoplifting, 56% of the sampled students said “yes” while 43% said “no” (Table 11). When the respondents were classified by shoplifters and non shoplifters, the results show that 49% of the shoplifters and 59% of non shoplifters agree that shoplifting can force a retail business to increase its prices in a bid to recover revenue lost to shoplifting. About 48% of the shoplifters do not believe that their behavior can lead retail shops to increase prices.

Table 11. Respondents’ belief about shoplifting and its impact on price increases by retail business

| Do you agree that shoplifting can force a business to increase its prices in a deliberate bid to recover revenue lost to shoplifting? | Ever shoplifted  |                 | Total |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-------|
|   | Never shoplifted | Have shoplifted |       |
| Yes   | 95               | 43              | 138   |
|   | 59.0%            | 49.4%           | 55.6% |
| No  | 65               | 42              | 107   |
|   | 40.4%            | 48.3%           | 43.1% |



Table 11 (cont.). Respondents’ belief about shoplifting and its impact on price increases by retail business

| Do you agree that shoplifting can force a business to increase its prices in a deliberate bid to recover revenue lost to shoplifting? | Ever shoplifted  |                 | Total  |
|---|------------------|-----------------|--------|
|   | Never shoplifted | Have shoplifted |        |
| Not indicated   | 1                | 2               | 3      |
|   | 0.6%             | 2.3%            | 1.2%   |
| Total   | 161              | 87              | 248    |
|   | 100.0%           | 100.0%          | 100.0% |

**Limitations of the study**

The analyses and interpretations of the results of this study have been based on the opinions of selected sample of students at the University of Botswana. The authors’ only belief is that the students have been honest in providing their responses since anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized during the data collection.

**Discussion and conclusion**

This study set out to accomplish the following objectives: to measure the magnitude of shoplifting among UB students; to determine how student shoplifters at UB differ from their non-shoplifting counterparts; to explore the reasons why they shoplift based on their perceptions of these reasons; to determine the demographic characteristics of the shoplifting and non-shoplifting students; to find out the items often shoplifted; to ascertain whether shoplifting is an isolated phenomenon or part of youthful misbehavior; and to find out how this behavior is affected by some social, economic, and demographic characteristics of students and their parents.

Using various descriptive and inferential statistics, the study has been able to show that among students of the University of Botswana, 35% have shoplifted at least once in their life time and 18% of them shoplifted recently (less than 6 months ago). The authors consider this percentage of shoplifters among University of Botswana (UB) students high although not as high as the finding of Kraut (1976) who reported that 61% of college-aged respondents have shoplifted at least once in their lifetimes and it calls for concerted consciousness of the magnitude of this crime among undergraduate students and a need for appropriate moral measures by the institution to curb this evil desire among students. In addition, the results showed that the magnitude of shoplifting was much higher among students between ages of 19 and 25 years. It was indicated that 73.6% of UB students in the above age category have shoplifted at least once, a finding that further shaded more light into the magnitude the crime against retail businesses among students considering the fact that the majority of the undergraduate students fall in that age category.

Students do not necessarily shoplift because they have no money as shoplifting intentions is shown to be negatively correlated with financial problems. In addition, the study has shown that students whose parental monthly income is over US\$1000.00 are about seven times more likely to shoplift than those whose parents’ monthly income is less than \$500.00, indicating that it is unlikely that the students would have gone to shoplift in order to augment the allowances they might have been receiving from parents. Also students at the University, majority of who are nationals, are well looked after by the Government of Botswana with substantial monthly allowances, free feeding and book allowances. Moreover, the perpetrators of this crime do not see themselves as thieves but rather perceive it as a game aimed at paying back the business owners for high charges on items sold to customers. These results are in line with Babin and Babin (1996) when they noted from previous studies (Babin, Robin, & Pike, 1994) that consumers’ ethical judgments make a substantial contribution in explaining shoplifting intentions compared to a more conventional economic value and risk explanation.

The study surprisingly showed that non-shoplifters as well as shoplifters indicated negative attitudes towards shoplifting. For instance 42% of the studied students (49.3% of non shoplifters and 27.4% of the shoplifters) see shoplifting as wrong and a good percentage see it as evil. The implication of this is that these adolescents are doing things that they believe to be wrong. There must therefore be something else that moves them to get involved in this misbehavior. One would have thought that a person’s belief more or less controls the individual’s actions. However, shoplifting, though criminal, needs also to be seen in the light of one of consumer behavior in that it is, part of people’s conduct in their role as consumers. For example, the choices and decisions made in a retail environment, share certain similarities with ‘normal’ consumer behavior, in that it results from the coincidence of other factors, namely: a motivated consumer (or in this case, the shoplifter), desirable products, and the opportunity to purchase (or steal) them (Felson, 1994; Hayes, 1999; Tonglet 2001). An understanding of how these factors interact with the potential shoplif-

ters' perceptions of the retail environment to influence the students' decision to engage in stealing is therefore necessary for effective shoplifting intervention. Effective intervention also depends on the prevailing situations that facilitate or impede shoplifting among the students.

The above observation can also be aligned to the results of the study which show (1) that majority of the students (75%), (82% of the "never shoplifted" and 62% of the "have shoplifted") agree that this misbehavior can force the retail store out of business, and (2) that a little over half of the students (55.6%) (59% of the "never shoplifted" and 49% of the "have shoplifted") also agree that the misbehavior can lead to increased prices of articles by the businesses so as to recover costs lost to shoplifting thus, implying that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions. These results could be explained by arguing that emotions rather than rational thinking might explain shoplifting behaviors (Babin and Babin, 1996). As has also been found in this study many of the student shoplifter perceive it as a game. Many of them are not professionals and they may just be stealing for the thrill of it. As Klemke (1982) quoted by Babin and Babin (1996), stated "29% of the respondents report they shoplift to 'see if they could get away with it', and 'over 13% shoplift for the fun and excitement of it". Thus, emotional rather than purely cognitive or moral motivations could be the driving factors that consumer emotions could help explain shoplifting behavior.

The students' recognition of parents' intervention through teaching their children not to shoplift, effectiveness of sales clerk and the effectiveness of store security staff in this study as deterrent to shoplifting point to possible intervention measures that the University of Botswana and the retail shops could adopt to safe guard the stores and reduce the incidence of shoplifting. This finding is also consistent with Tonglet (2001) who found out that subjective norm and peer influence were significantly correlated with the shoplifting attitudes of all the respondents, suggesting that social factors may play an important role in the

formation of shoplifting attitudes. The influence of family and friends who disapprove of shoplifting is likely to reinforce and/or influence the negative shoplifting attitudes of those who do not shoplift; whereas for those who do shoplift, their family and friends (who are more approving of shoplifting behaviour) may provide shoplifting information and a supportive climate for the behavior and reinforce and/or influence their pro-shoplifting views.

## 12. Recommendations

The University of Botswana, like most other universities world-wide, houses students whose ages are between 16 and 30 years. As has been found in this study, emotional rather than rational thinking has been the most controlling factor. It is the authors' belief that a lot can be done by the institution to assist the students get out of this pressure and create awareness. The authors, therefore, recommend the following courses of action to deter the students from this negative behavior:

1. Develop students' educational programs and orientations aimed at teaching the students to be aware that shoplifting is a serious crime against business; and that shoplifting leads to higher product prices and could force a retail business out of business.
2. Encourage parents to teach their children to be aware of the dangers of shoplifting and to discourage them from engaging in it.
3. Encourage the stores on the university campus to overhaul their Internal Security Systems by establishing adequate procedures to minimize the risk of theft which among others include organizing training for both sales clerks and the internal security personnel, increased alertness on the part of the security officers during the opening and closing hours, during lunch times and during shift changes.
4. Encourage the stores on campus to place on display at the entrance of the stores stickers that emphasize the negative consequences of shoplifting and that urges customers not to take anything from the shop without paying for it.

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