Reducing Retail Theft and Demands on Police Service at Walmart in Paducah, Kentucky

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Overview

- Sample site – Paducah, Kentucky
- Case study – Paducah Police Department
  - Comparison – Paducah compared to other Jackson Purchase cities
- Initial problem discovery
- Problem perspectives
  - The local perspective
  - The regional perspective
  - The national perspective
- Dissect the problem
- Response
- Results
- Conclusion and questions
Paducah, Kentucky

- Up to 100K daytime population
- 25,000 nighttime population
- 20 square miles
- 78 sworn
- 8 non-sworn
Paducah, Kentucky

- 18,000 + unique addresses
- 7 police zones
- 2 Walmart stores
Initial Discovery

Hiring an analyst

- Walmart crimes represented a large portion of crime in the hiring packet given to the applicants
- Response to the packet detailed possible problem-oriented strategies to address the problem

Officer observations

- Zone 6 and 7 officers often complained about the amount of time spent at the Walmart stores
- “If you weren’t working an accident, you were at Walmart. I would spend whole shifts there.”
- The Police Department internal blotter almost always had two or three reports from Walmart
The Local Problem

• During 2014 and 2015
  • Walmart represented **15%** of **all** reports taken by PPD
  • Walmart represented **67%** of shoplifting reports
• **15%** of crime reports in Paducah took place in a 1/10 of a square mile area
### Continued Analysis: Walmart’s impact in other jurisdictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Walmart Locations</th>
<th>Percent of All Crime Reports</th>
<th>Percent of Shoplifting Under $500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paducah</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayfield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The National Problem

The Tampa Bay Times found the Tampa Police Department received 2 calls per hour per day from Walmart.

Bloomberg Business Week found the Tulsa Police Department 1,700 more calls for service at their Walmart locations than their next leading retailer.

Wolfe and Pyrooz (2014) found counties with Walmart stores have higher levels of property and violent crime.
### Situational Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor Visibility</th>
<th>Lack of overt monitoring of restrooms, dressing rooms, and blind corners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obscured main isles</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Personnel on the Floor</th>
<th>One could have a complete shopping experience without speaking to a single Walmart employee</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No monitoring of exits or entrances</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cost cutting measures</th>
<th>Removal of Door Greeters</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under staffed self-checkouts next to the door</td>
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| Camouflaged Signage            | Security camera indicator and anti-theft signs are the same color scheme as the rest of the store |
Potential shoplifter identified

Surveillance by plainclothes Asset Protection officer

Individual selects merchandise

Individual does not pay for merchandise

Individual attempts to leave

Asset Protection takes individual to the back of the store and calls police

Individual is confronted at the door by plainclothes Asset Prevention

Police respond and handle reporting issues.

Individual runs and emergency call is made to Police

Individual is cited and released

Individual is arrested and taken to jail
Walmart Crime Triangle

CRIME: Shoplifting

Super Controller: Walmart Corporate
Manager: Asset Protection | Store Managers
Super Controller: Walmart Corporate
Guardian: Employees, Clerks, Door Greeters
Target: Attractive Products
Place
Offender
Handler
Super Controller

Summary of the Problem

• This is a manufactured problem
  • Asset protection practices incentivize catching shoplifters rather than preventing theft
  • No meaningful changes to the shopping environment would take place
  • The reduction strategy for the Walmart stores was for PPD to do more

• Understanding Walmart as a resource problem rather than a crime problem
  • Highlighted the need for PPD to change instead of relying on Walmart
Response

- Online reporting solution for thefts under $500
- Asset protection would only call if there was an act of violence or if offender needed to be identified
- Training to use system, build casefiles, and solicit information from offenders
- Monitoring calls for service, traditional crime reports, and online reports submitted by Walmart team
- Routine review of BWC footage and E911 call audio
Results in the Year Post Intervention

On average PPD officers spent 35 fewer hours per month on calls for service at Walmart.

PPD spent an estimated $26,884 less in Walmart related costs.

45% reduction in Shoplifting Under $500.
Changes in Theft under $500 at Walmart Stores in Jackson Purchase Jurisdictions

- Paducah Police Department
- Murray Police Department
- Benton Police Department
- Mayfield Police Department
- Fulton Police Department
Changes in Minutes Spent at Walmart Stores in Paducah
Changes in Estimated Cost Accrued at Walmart Stores in Paducah
Conclusions

• Going after the largest resource drains can pay off

• Sometimes problem frameworks need to be shifted to allow for non-traditional response

• Our problem is not unique
Questions

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