RESEARCH NOTE

The Choice Structuring Properties of Security Consumption: an exploratory study of Security Consumption Culture within Small Shops

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Abstract

Using Manunta's and Manunta's (2006) theory of the security process and the concept of choice structuring properties as heuristic devices, this paper develops a conceptual framework designed to aid our understanding of the factors that drive security consumption within the context of small shops. The conceptual framework is developed through a number of exploratory interviews with the owners of convenience stores. These suggest a security consumption culture exists that is generated by a desire to protect businesses from crime threats and a sense of isolation from local criminal justice agencies. A self-protection mentality and functional form of worry is observed that creates demand for security, but decisions to purchase specific security objects are dictated by choice structuring properties focused around subjective anxieties about crime events, the extent security devices are seen to offer reassurance and financial constraints. Of course, these findings are (at best) tentative but help to set an agenda for further research in this area.

Keywords: Security Consumption; Choice Structuring Properties, Security Consumption Culture.

Introduction

Although an extensive literature exists in relation to the concept of consumption (Corrigan, 1997; Fine, 2013**)** and there has been significant focus on loss prevention in the retail sector (see for example**,** Greggo & Kresevich, 2011; Beck & Peacock, 2009; Hayes, 2007), little research has explored or theorized about what factors drive the consumption of security in businesses. The rapid expansion of the security industry in recent decades has been widely acknowledged (see Gill 2006; Kraham, 2008; Gill and Howell, 2012; Sarre and Prenzler, 2011). As Krahman (2008) observes between 1991 and 2006, UK turnover in relation to security equipment increased from just under £100m to nearly £250m and the British Retail Consortium 'Retail Crime Costs' survey data indicate that the average spend on security per retail outlet increased by over 50%[1] between 1992/3 and 2008/9 (see Burrows and Speed, 1994; BRC, 2009). Sarre and Prenzler, (2011) note that a number of 'macro-level' demand factors including rises in crime, the growth in health/safety legislation requirements, insurance requirements and the shift in responsibility for security provision from the state to the individual have helped to drive this expansion. At a micro level, the 2002 Commercial Victimisation Survey (Shury et al, 2002) found that less than a third of security within retail and manufacturing business was implemented as a direct result of crime victimisation, though Westerlund, Rajala and Rajala, (2011) suggest that having adequate and up-to-date security provision can be important in enhancing business image/ reputation. It has also been noted that some businesses might favour private security as a way of resolving crime and disorder problems- rather than calling upon public policing (Williams, 2005) and Ruighaver et al (2007) assert that the occupational culture of an organisation is a key factor in shaping consumption decisions.

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[1] This is a crude measure as the BRC is a head office survey. The figures include capital and revenue expenditure. Due to the way data are presented in the BRC surveys, the figure for 1992 was derived by dividing the total spend (£370m) by the number of outlets covered in the survey (34,341).   The average was £9,280 in 1992/3 and £13,950 in 2009/09.

Within the context of small shops security consumption might plausibly include anything from the installation of simplistic physical security devices (such as shutters) to hi-tech CCTV systems and the types of security installed will vary by business type, size and location. However, Macpherson (2009) suggests the cost of security is always likely to be a key factor in consumption decisions. Indeed, security purchase has commonly been described as a 'grudge spend' principally borne out of rational self-interest deemed necessary to protect business interests (Goold et al, 2010). This rational process appears to be evident in the description of security consumption offered by Goold et al (2010) where businesses security objects are commonly purchased remotely from where they are to be used (for example, a security department at a central office is the purchaser and objects are implemented remotely in a shopping centre or branch of a store). Indeed, this might accurately describe the process of consumption in many large organizations, but it forgets that most small business do not have security departments, complete security risk assessments or have specific security budgets. For example, of the 4.7million UK registered business in January 2012[2], less than 1% (n=214,155) employed more than nine staff (Department Business Innovation and Skills, 2012). It would be correct to assume that the majority of these businesses are likely to be operating out of one site and security purchase will be made directly by the business owner and not remotely via a security department. Moreover, in relation to the notion of rational consumption making decisions, little attention has been paid to how anxieties about crime might influence decision making. Indeed, Hope (2000) suggests that further explanation of the extent that 'subjective anxieties' (or as Giddens (1990) prefers 'ontological insecurities') drive demand for security[3] is required as there has been a tendency to describe the supply-side of security (i.e. the growth of the security industry) rather than explore how everyday 'micro-level' factors produce 'demand' and ultimately 'consumption'.

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory study of security consumption within a small sample of convenience shops in an English city. Using Manunta and Manunta's (2006) theory of the security process as a conceptual framework, the research aimed to understand how business owners protect their assets from identified threats and what factors influence their choice to purchase security measures. With this in mind, the study focused on a number of specific questions:

1. What types of security do small shops purchase or use? To what extent are these physical security devices, manned security services or more informal measures- such as weapons?
2. What factors or processes trigger the desire to purchase specific security items or to engage in other forms of security practices? To what extent can these choices be said to be informed by making rational decisions (based upon cost of items/ risk assessment) or a response to subjective anxieties/ ontological insecurities? How do micro and macro level factors inform these decisions?
3. How is information about specific products received within the sample group?

The findings are based around in-depth interviews with twenty owners of small single-site convenience stores. Of course, the small number of interviews limits the extent to which the findings can be deemed to be generalisable, but a number of important themes are identified that could be subject to further exploration in future research projects.

Approach

The fieldwork centred on interviews with the owners of twenty small convenience stores[4]. The work was completed as part of a pilot exercise intended to inform a larger study. In order to explore preliminary research questions, a conceptual framework was developed that drew heavily on the work of Manunta and Manunta (2006) in relation to the 'security process' and the concept of choice structuring properties (Cornish and Clarke,

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[2] In the UK.
[3] Gill and Howell's (2012) overview of the security sector is an excellent contemporary overview of the supply-side of the security industry in the UK.
[4] This research was financed through a University of Leicester College grant.

1986; Natarajan, 2012). The main constituents of the conceptual framework are expressed diagrammatically in Figure 1. Drawing upon Manunta and Manunta's (2006) framework the security process is hypothesised as comprising of three primary components: a protector, an asset and a threat. In order to promote security a protector (such as a business owner) will aim to protect an asset (such as the contents of a shop) from a threat (such as a shoplifter). Indeed, Manunta and Manunta (2006:635) go on to suggest that the security process consists of three stages (1) 'the perception of the evidence of the possible existence of a threat', (2) 'the cognition that this evidence may indeed represent a threat' and (3) 'the decision of acting upon this threat'. Thus our investigations were primarily concerned with understanding the processes that begin with a perceived threat, but result in security action or purchase. Our starting position was to hypothesize that business owners would make clear rational choices to consume security shaped by a range of 'choice structuring properties'. The concept of choice structuring properties is derived from rational choice theory and has been used to identify the choice structuring decisions offenders make when selecting targets for a variety of crime types such as shoptheft (Carroll and Weaver, 1986), Robbery (Feeney, 1986) and goods trafficking (Natarajan, 2012). This postulates that offenders often 'think' strategically about target selection based upon a number of choice structuring properties[5] primarily shaped around the effort required to commit the crime, the risk of apprehension and the potential rewards. Therefore, it was hypothesised that as choice structuring properties of offending can be observed, similar properties might be observable in relation to attempts to prevent offending through the consumption of security.

Figure 1: a hypothetical view of the relationship between protector, asset, threats, consumption decisions and security implementation.

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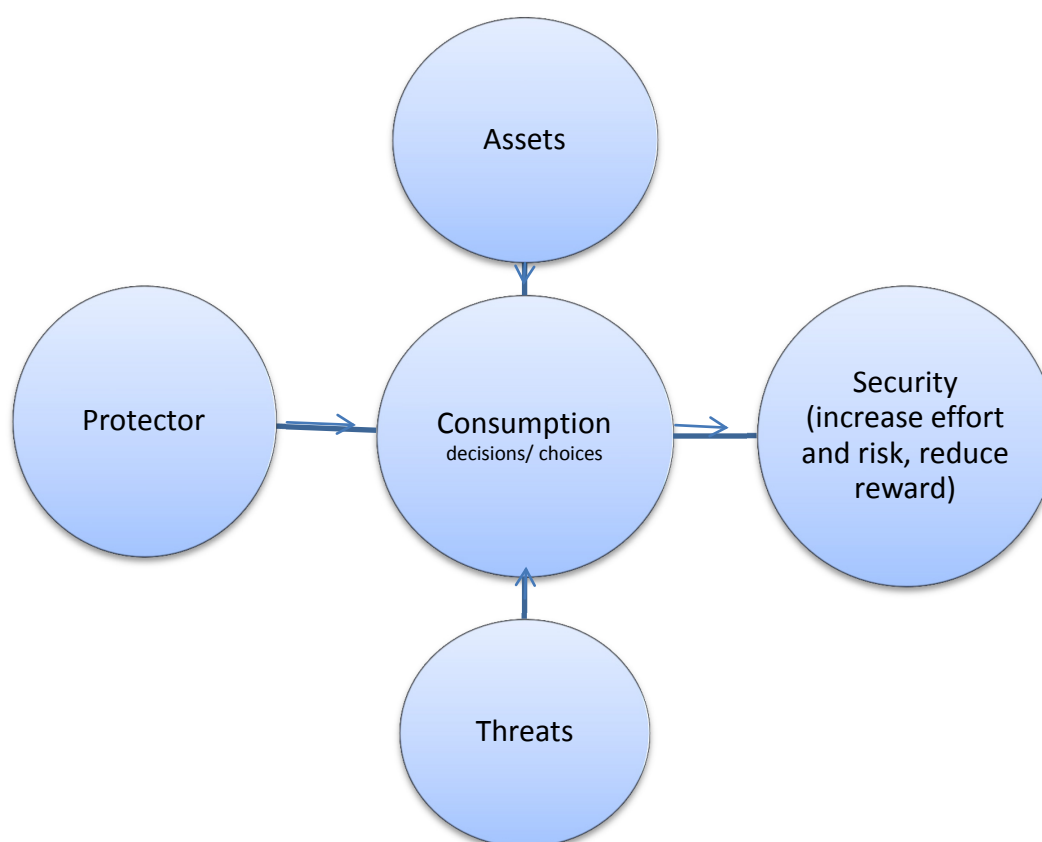
[5] Although it is been widely acknowledged that for many expressive offences (such as a pub brawl) or crimes where alcohol and drugs may be facilitators involved, the concept of rationality might be questioned (see Haywood, 2007).

The sample frame for the study was drawn from businesses all located within a 'ward area' of around a square mile in an inner urban area of a medium-sized English city. The city has a population of over 300,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2012) and in the ward area, nearly one in five residents (18.7%) were classified as Asian, which is higher than the average for England (5.5%), but lower than the rest of the city (37.1%). At 194 crime incidents per 1,000 in 2008/09 the area had a higher than average crime rate per annum than the rest of the city (139 per 1,000) or nationally (86 per 1,000) and in 2012 parts of the ward area were classified as being within the 5% of the most deprived in England (Leicester City Council, 2012). The area comprised a large population of small independently-run retail/service sector businesses and a decision was made to focus on convenience stores for three reasons. First, as this was a pilot study it enabled a manageable number of interviews to be conducted within the required timeframe and budget. Second, collecting data from one small subset of businesses allows for a fairly in-depth understanding of the factors that influence consumption to be made. Third, convenience stores are considered to be 'an important part of the fabric of community life' in the UK (ACS, 2012:2). Just under 50,000 convenience stores operate in the UK, most are open for long hours and sell a range of goods from small food items, to alcohol and some even sell electronic items (ACS, 2012). It has been noted (see Hopkins and Tilley, 2000), that these factors often put the convenience store at high-risk from some crime types- such as shoplifting. With this in mind, it was thought that crime and issues around security would be key concerns for these businesses.

In total, 49 convenience stores were operating in the area. Researchers made a direct approach to all business for an interview with the person responsible for security purchasing decisions. In total 20 business owners agreed to be interviewed (a response of 41%). A semi-structured interview schedule was developed that included a mixture of closed questions designed to capture quantifiable information (such as crime victimisation experience/ types of security devices installed) and a number of more open-ended questions (around perceptions of the local area, anxiety about crime, reasons for the purchase of security, precautionary routine measures used to prevent crime and how information about security/ security products was received). All interviews were conducted face-to-face (normally in the back of the shop) and were able to elicit detailed information about threats to the business, measures installed to protect the business from identified threats and how decisions to consume security were made. The method used both set an agenda for the interview, but also allowed respondents to talk freely around issues in relation to security, crime and their business as they wished. As would be expected, some respondents offered detailed information about their reasons for consumption more readily than others.

It should be noted that although the small sample size and geographical location means the findings are not generalisable to the wider business population, they do indicate how such businesses construct threats and how an appetite for security (Loader, 2009) is generated. Of course, fieldwork in another geographical area (even within the same city) or with a sample of different business types might yield different results. However, this small localised study could be replicated across other areas in order to develop understanding of security cultures across a variety of business settings.

Research Findings: threats, asset protection and security consumption

All of the businesses interviewed could be defined a convenience stores and all sold a range of goods including food, alcohol and cigarettes. A total of 16 respondents had been in business for over two or more years and the majority (n=15) were run by members of the Indian (Guajarati) community[6].

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[6] Nationally, around 48% of all UK convenience stores are run by Asian of British Asian proprietors (ACS, 2012). Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) (2012) statistics suggest that convenience stores comprise around 10% of the retail sector (50,000 of 515,000 businesses).

The interviews began by asking respondents about the threats to the business. Initially the discussion focused around specific threats the business faced from crime. Respondents were asked if the business had been victim of a number of crime types over the previous 12 months, prior to the last 12 months and if they felt they were likely to be victim of any crime types over the next 12 months (see Table 1). In total, 17 business had experienced at least one crime type over the previous 12 months, with all businesses stating that they thought it likely they would also be victim of crime in the next 12 months. Shoplifting represented the most common crime threat to businesses as 18 had experienced this crime at some point and 15 over the previous 12 months. Indeed, the prevalence rate of 75% (n=15) for shoplifting over the previous 12 months was higher than the prevalence rate recorded for the same crime in all three sweeps of the Commercial Victimisation Survey to date (these were 32% in 2012 and just over 40% in 2002 and 1994 – see Home Office 2013; Shury et al, 2002 and Mirrlees-Black and Ross, 1994)[7].   Over a half of businesses had also experienced verbal abuse over the previous 12 months and anti-social behaviour, violence against staff and racial/ religious harassment were relatively common experiences when compared to national data[8]. In addition there was a sense that future crime victimisation was inevitable with 19 business stating that they would probably be victims of shoplifting, abuse (n=16), violence (n=13) and racially motivated abuse (n=10) over the next 12 months. For the majority of businesses, worry about crime was constant (n=14) and crime was considered a major threat to the future of the business.

Table 1: Experience of crime over the previous 12 months or ever

	Number of Victims (12 month recall period)	Number of premises ever experiencing (prior to 12 month recall period)	Number suggesting crime event 'probably' or 'definitely' likely to happen over next 12 months
Shoplifting	15	18	19
Verbal abuse	11	11	15
Anti-social behaviour	10	11	16
Violence against staff	7	7	13
Racial/ religious harassment	6	6	10
Burglary	3	6	10
Fraud	3	5	5
Robbery	2	5	10
Employee Theft	2	2	2
Theft from company vehicle	2	2	3
Online crime	0	0	1
Theft of company vehicle	0	1	1
Criminal damage	0	4	6
Any crime	**17**	**18**	**20**

The data revealed that there are significant direct crime threats to businesses and there was a common expectation that some form of future victimisation was inevitable. The types of risk heterogeneity characteristics that generated crime victimisation in these businesses have been noted in previous research (see for example, Burrows and Hopkins, 2005). All of the businesses sold consumer items (such as alcohol and cigarettes) that

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[7] It should be noted that strict comparisons cannot be made as the CVS records shoplifting against the retail and wholesale sector- so the actual figure for the retail sector alone cannot be ascertained.
[8] For example, around 10% of retail/ wholesale business sampled in the 2012 Commercial Victimisation Survey experienced assaults or threats.

were easily accessible and easy to conceal. This made them attractive targets for shoplifting (and occasionally burglary). However, conflict between staff and customers was also a feature of such businesses, with accusations from customers of shop staff giving them the wrong change, refusals to accept suspected fake banknotes and intervention in shoplifting being common sources of conflict. This made staff vulnerable to verbal abuse and the possibility of violence. Just under half of the respondents felt the business they worked in was at real risk from acquisitive crime (in particular shop theft) and such incidents had the potential to generate abuse and violence if offenders were challenged. Indeed, the following extract illustrates both the tedium felt by one owner in relation to shoplifting and also how it can generate abusive behaviours:

It happens everyday [shoplifting], but we can get people who abuse you if you stop them...one guy few months ago, drunk, come in and tries to take the cans and I stop and he say 'fuck off Paki, go back home'. He don't even know that I'm bloody Indian! He tried to hit me. But we get to expect it...'

Interview 20

Verbal abuse was fairly prevalent and on occasion this included racial insults (as illustrated above). Although some previous research has noted the challenges presented to Asian-run businesses in relation to racial abuse (see Ekblom & Simon, 1988), this has been an area of surprisingly little research focus. It was notable that although non-contact acquisitive crimes (such as burglary) did occur, it was the prospect of face-to-face encounters with strangers from the outside world that was a major cause for concern. All respondents expressed concerns over leaving family members (in particular females) alone to look after the shop in case an incident occurred (one owner said he would never intervene in shoplifting unless several staff are present). However, particular anxieties existed where the businesses premises was adjacent to the family home. Indeed, in five businesses the respondent also lived on-site with their family. This arrangement is common in many convenience stores where the shop is essentially an extension of the family home. However, this does raise questions about the extent the private space of the family home can be secured from strangers entering the quasi-public space of the shop. In these businesses the shop would be open for business whilst the members of family would often be sitting in an adjoining room. Some respondents mentioned that this was a worry as strangers from the outside public space had relatively easy access to the private space of the family home. One respondent mentioned that his family experienced an incident of robbery where the offender entered the front room of the family home via the shop front.

Businesses were asked about the security measures installed to protect their assets. As Table 2 reveals, the twenty businesses had a total of 116 physical security objects installed. The most common security objects were shutters that can pull down over the windows of the business (n=18), internal CCTV (n=18), a panic alarm (17), burglar alarm (n=17) and a fake note detector (n=15). Businesses were then asked for the primary reason why the security measure had been purchased/ installed.[9] These answers were recorded as free text, but were later coded into a number of categories that emerged through the analysis. Here four general themes emerged. First, in the majority of cases (51%: n=59) security measures were installed out a 'general need' for security. Second, 27% (n=31) were installed out of a desire to watch over customers/ potential offenders. Third, 14% (n=12) were installed due to fears of falling victim to a specific crime event and (fourth) as a direct response to a specific crime event in the business (6%: n=7). Overall, security measures such as shutters, alarms and extra window locks were most commonly purchased out of a need for general security. Such measures were viewed as a fairly standard package that most businesses have, with shutters and window locks target hardening the premises from potential intruders or criminal damage (in the case of shutters) and burglar alarms[10] acting as a deterrent to potential offenders. Measures such as external CCTV, mirrors and security lights were also commonly installed

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[9] In most businesses some form of security had been present when the current owner moved in to the business. In these cases respondents were asked why they continued to use these forms of security when they took over the businesses.
[10] Alarms were also part of an insurance requirement for two businesses.

in order to keep watch over customers or potential offenders[11]. Indeed, security mirrors were commonly used to provide surveillance in hidden areas of shops and security lights lit up dark spaces surrounding shops at night. Internal CCTV[12] was viewed as an important measure as it not only prevented crime, but also recorded crime events[13]. One respondent also mentioned the importance of external CCTV as 'my early warning system so I can see what is coming in' (Interview 5). Fake note detectors were most likely to be installed because of fear of a crime event. In the sample area many businesses had reacted to rumours about the number of fake £20 notes in circulation across the city, so had purchased a fake not detector.   Interestingly only 7% of security measures were installed as a direct response to crime victimisation. This is substantially less than figure of around 30% recorded by the 2002 CVS (see Shury et al, 2002). Interestingly only one business said they had installed any security measures as a result of police advice.

Table 2: Security measures installed and reasons for installation

	Reasons for installation						
	Need for general security	Need for surveillance	Direct response to Victimisation experience	Fear of specific crime event	Police advice	Other/ not specified	Total Number of security Measures
Shutters	11		3	1		3	18
Internal CCTV	6	12					18
Panic alarm	15		1		1		17
Burglar alarm	14	1	1			1	17
Fake note detector	0		2	13			15
External CCTV	1	8					9
Mirrors	1	7					8
Extra window locks	7						7
Security lights	3	3					6
Guards	1						1
Total Number	59	31	7	14	1	4	116
Percentage of	51	27	6	12	1	3	100

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[11] Although it might be thought such measures are commonly installed as direct responses to the types of crime observed in these businesses, no respondents said he measures were installed as a direct response to a specific crime incident.

[12] Under the 2003 Licensing Act, CCTV can be a condition of licence. This wasn't suggested as a reason for the installation of CCTV in any of the sample group.

[13] In addition it could also capture other events- like customers who may try to stage a fake accident in the shop (such as slipping on the floor) in order to make a claim against the owner.

These data show that a need for 'general security' appears to be a key driving factor in relation to the consumption of security within the sample of businesses. At first glance 'general security' appears to be a rather nebulous concept, but two themes emerged. First, on a very pragmatic level respondents spoke about the protection of physical assets- such as buildings and stock. Second, there were more emotive connotations related to the human protection of staff and family members. Importantly, crime threats were often seen as an 'occupational hazard' (interview 1), with shoplifting and abuse being almost daily experiences. Therefore, the desire to purchase security was often unrelated to a specific crime event, but was about maximising protection against routine daily threats and concerns over the unknown threats outside of the business that could possibly enter the business. Here there were community-level (or meso) factors and wider macro factors at work in promoting the perception of threats to the business. Generally, respondents suggested that there was a degree of cohesion in the community (suggested by 14 respondents) and that the business community did attempt to look out for each other (as suggested by 13 businesses). However, 15 respondents saw crime as being a specific problem in the community, with 16 suggesting drunkenness or anti-social behaviour were particular problems. Therefore, despite a 'sense of community cohesion', there was also a sense that crime was a problem in the community. Indeed, over half of the respondents thought that the crime problem had got worse in their community over the past 12 months and even despite the widely reported falls in crime nationally (see for example, Farrell et al, 2011) many perceived the local crime problems as getting worse[14] with many citing the current economic situation as a reason for this. It was also apparent that informal networks of business helped to foster such anxieties about crime. Many of the business knew each other and an informal Traders Association existed that met fairly infrequently. It was evident these informal networks helped to reinforce the view that threats to business were persistent. For example, when the Traders Association met it was not clear whether this served as a forum to help businesses to organise against crime or just to allow for 'gossip' that increased the subjective anxieties of business owners through rumours and 'chat' about crime problems. The suggestion that these social networks can promote anxieties about crime and work to undermine security prudence resonates closely with the concept of 'crime talk' (Loader, 2009). In this respect, such networks and the associated 'chatter' about crime is often very localised and promotes notions of a need to defend 'us' from outside threats or 'social process and trends in the outside world' (Loader, 2009: 248). Indeed, within the sample of businesses, the installation of fake note detectors was primarily borne out of rumours about the circulation of false notes through such networks. One business owner also mentioned concerns over the death of a shopkeeper in a neighbouring area of the city that had recently been reported in the local newspaper[15]. This story had been the subject of conversation between several businesses locality and had promoted anxieties about keeping businesses open until late at night.

For a number of businesses, anxieties about crime threats were also exacerbated by a sense that local criminal justice agencies, such as the Community Safety Partnership and the police were seen as having little interest in the threats faced by small businesses and resultantly were ineffective at tackling retail-related crime problems. Although businesses had regular contact with local Community Support Officers, just over a third (n=7) thought that the police had little control over crime in the area and many suggested the police were fairly unresponsive to their needs. The common complaint against the local police was that they were ineffective at dealing with persistent problems and were often slow to respond even when shoplifters were caught 'red-handed'. Indeed, there was even a suggestion that local authority support for the opening of a large superstore proved that local agencies did not care for the 'little fish' (Interview 1). Although, these factors helped generate a feeling that

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[14] It should be noted that the findings from the 2012 BRC 'Retail Crime Costs' survey suggest that crime against retailers could be increasing (see BRC, 2013).

[15] This shopkeeper lived in a neighbouring community and died after being victim of a robbery.

businesses had to look after themselves and take responsibility for security, other factors were also at play in influencing choices to purchase security. These were primarily shaped around the affordability of security and perceptions of the likely impact of security. Respondents were understandably reluctant to disclose information on how much they had spent on security purchase (capital spend) or on-going upkeep costs (revenue) per year. However, 14 respondents indicated that they viewed the purchase of security as being essential to the safety of staff and security of assets; and would spend more on security if they could. As one respondent stated:

I would definitely buy more security if I had the money. The more cameras, mirrors and other security measures you've got in your shop, the more risky it is for these criminals to rob you and they know that.

Interview 17

This view seemed to be closely tied to perceptions about the protection that security products could offer. A total of 19 businesses said that installation of many security products made them feel safer and 18 thought that the security measures they had in place had prevented crime over the past 12 months. This finding not only resonates with Gill and Howell's (2012) suggestion that much security is purchased as it is effective at protecting assets, but (as the following extract illustrates) also emphasises the reassurance function of security:

You have to have CCTV otherwise it's too dangerous in here late at night.... We get to 6 [pm] and the garage is shut, the car lot [respondent points to garage next to shop and car lot opposite] it gets quiet, that's when I get worried.

Interview 2

In this respect there seemed to be an acknowledgement that businesses needed to purchase physical security in order to be 'as secure as possible' (Interview 1). However, as one owner suggested 'as everybody else has got CCTV everybody has to have it' (Interview 5). This appears to contradict the suggestion by Goold et al (2010: 10) that security products do not offer 'social reassurance' or the comforting sense that 'I am buying what others are buying'. Some respondents clearly felt there was a pressure to have the same security measures as other businesses. Indeed, this pressure was partially shaped both through the informal networks that existed across businesses and also knowledge about security products received from 'experts' such as the police, trade bodies or information presented in trade magazines about security. The extent that specific advice about security products from agencies such as the police was adhered to was negligible (as the data in table 2 suggest), but other information sources encouraged businesses to think that some security products (such as CCTV) were important to have. This resonates with the suggestion that security suppliers shape the needs of their market by suggesting products are 'must have' items (see Goold et al, 2012; Krahman, 2008). However, it should be noted that in order to further protect their assets all businesses also often adopted more informal precautionary behaviours. Indeed, in addition to the purchase of physical measures, routine practices such as such as cashing up regularly (n=16) and closing early at weekends due to fears over trouble generated by the local night-time economy (n=7) and never leaving staff alone in the evenings (n=6), were also used. These practices were also responses to general anxieties about crime, though on occasion informal precautionary behaviours were used to mitigate risk in relation to particular local events. For example, a number of businesses had recently closed on the day of a march in the city by the English Defence League (EDL) and occasionally businesses closed early due to worries over violence associated with football matches. Four of the businesses also suggested they would be willing to engage in rather direct forms of informal security responses in order protect their business if necessary. Each of these business owners held a weapon behind the counter for protection. As one owner stated:

Yeah, of course, I've got a baseball bat, a knife and a gun and I'm even thinking bout' getting a German shepherd for the evenings. Nobody gonna mess with me or my shop then!
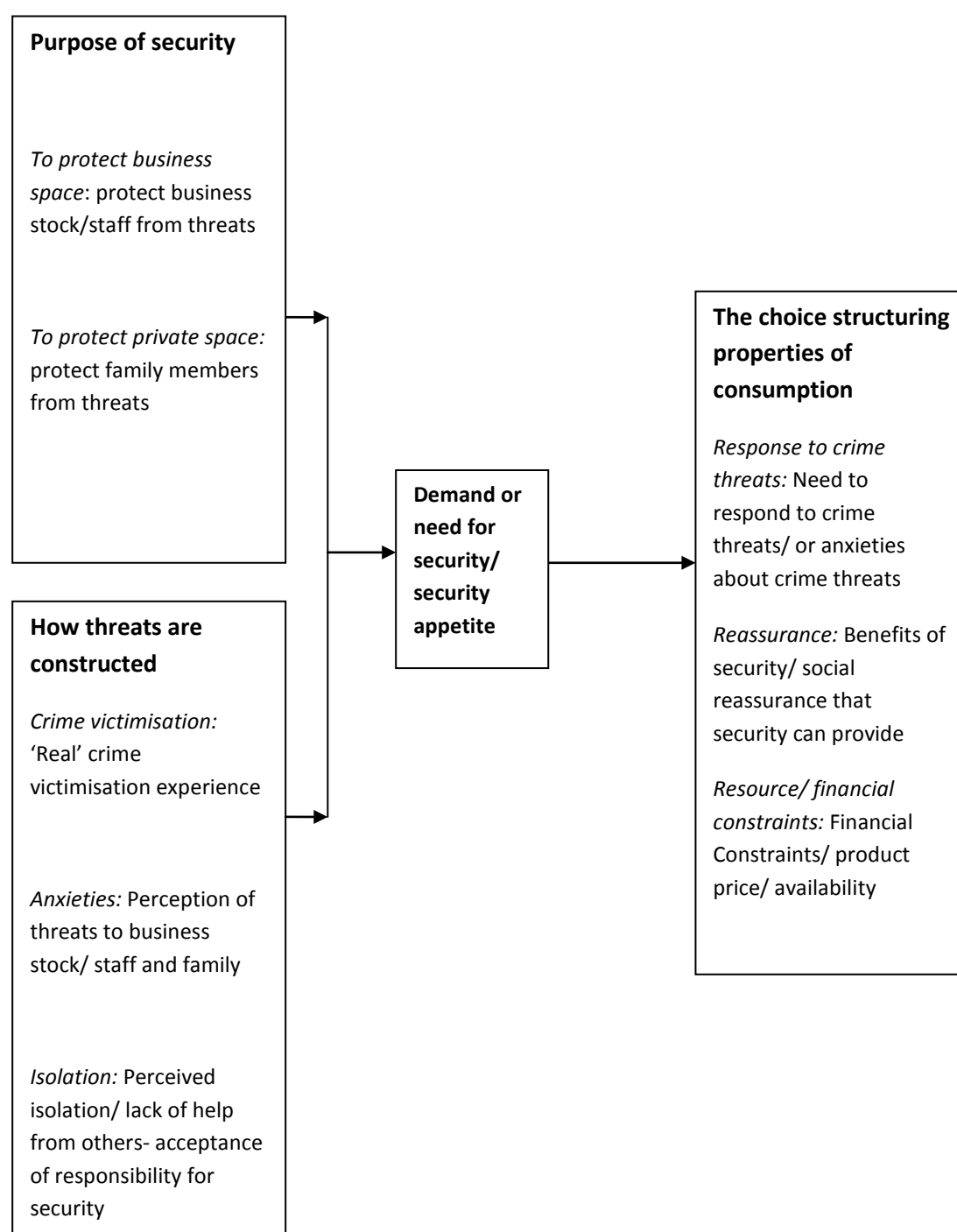
Interview 6

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Discussion and concluding comments

Firm conclusions about the reasons for the consumption of security and the meanings of security to small businesses are difficult to draw from such a small sample size and the findings presented are best viewed as tentative. Our brief overview of the previous literature (outlined in the introduction) suggests that demand for security can be driven by a range of factors including rises in crime, the growth in health/safety legislation requirements, insurance requirements, a sense of responsibilization, crime victimisation and in order to enhance business image/ reputation (of course, the cost of security can be a constraining factor). Within the context of the convenience shops studied, security consumption was constrained by cost/purchase thresholds (Goold, 2009), but crime and security were emotively charged issues influenced by a range of less rationally informed factors. As one might expect, businesses did not purchase security as an act of 'consumptionist pleasure' and the initial financial outlay on security might have been made grudgingly. However, as respondents viewed the primary functions of security as being to protect their own business and members of their family, none of the respondents could be perceived as being entirely reticent purchasers. Thus any suggestion that it was 'cost' that ruled over all else did not hold true. Three primary choice structuring properties seemed to promote or constrain security consumption: (1) the extent business owners thought a direct response to a specific crime event *or* to the perceived risk of a crime event was required; (2) the extent any purchased security objects could provide a sense of reassurance and (3) the extent that security was within financial reach or the purchase threshold of the business. The relationship between the security process and these choice structuring properties is expressed diagrammatically in Figure 2.

Manunta and Manunta (2006) argue that security is primarily about the protection of 'assets', such as cash or stock. However, within the sample group 'security' was not just about protecting stock or cash from threats. For these shops, often the quasi-public space of the business was directly adjacent to the family 'private space' and also family members often worked in the business. Therefore 'security' had greater meaning than simply protecting financial assets from instrumentally motivated forms of crime (such as shoplifting) as there were also significant concerns about protecting family members from more expressive forms of crime (such as abuse and violence). Goold et al (2010) note that security consumption decisions in larger organisations are often remotely made by purchasers (or makers of security decisions) on behalf of users or takers (such as employees or customers). However, in the sample group, the business owners were both purchases/ makers of security decisions and the users/ takers. Therefore, as the purchasers of security worked (and often lived) in the business, the threats or perceptions about crime were not just something that might happen in a branch of the business hundreds of miles away, but represented real threats to their business, staff and family. Thus, threats or anxieties were constructed through 'real' lived experience based upon hours of working within the shop. Indeed, the crime risks faced by these businesses were considerable, with high rates of shoptheft, abuse and violence and although this direct experience of crime clearly constructed the sense of threat, such threats were also constructed via other meso/ community and macro factors. Thus the 'subjective anxieties' observed by Hope (2000) or the 'ontological insecurities' observed by Giddens (1990) appear to be an important factor in generating the 'security appetite'. Micro level anxieties (working long hours in a risky environment), meso level anxieties (drunkenness and disorder in the community) and macro level factors (fears over the link between the economic situation and crime) all generated a sense of 'crime consciousness' (Garland, 2001), based upon a mixture of *real* experience and *perception* of risk. However, this crime consciousness was also exacerbated by a sense of isolation or detachment from agencies that might offer some sense of reassurance. Here, the 'lukewarm' relationship between businesses and the police (the criminal justice agency the businesses had closest contact with) fermented this sense of isolation. As Bamfield (2012) notes such feelings of isolation and apathy towards the police can lead to negative consequences, such as non-reporting of crime. As was observed, many incidents of shoplifting went unreported, but the relationship further created a sense that business had to take full responsibility for security and 'a self-protection mentality' similar to that observed by Sarre and Prenzler

(2011) emerged. Thus the sense of isolation appeared to make business more security conscious and drove a desire to self-protect from crime via the purchase of security and the use of routine precautionary actions to reduce risk (such as closing early at certain times and cashing up regularly). Of course, the concept of responsibilization has been widely cited as a reason for the exponential growth of the security industry in recent years (see for example, Goddard, 2012). In this study, it was clear how businesses felt a sense of responsibility for security and although no business owners suggested that the security of the business should be anything but their responsibility; the feeling of isolation and detachment from criminal justice agencies further reinforced the need to self-protect.

Figure 2: the security process and the structuring properties of security decisions

Purpose of security

To protect business space: protect business stock/staff from threats

To protect private space: protect family members from threats

How threats are constructed

Crime victimisation: 'Real' crime victimisation experience

Anxieties: Perception of threats to business stock/ staff and family

Isolation: Perceived isolation/ lack of help from others- acceptance of responsibility for security

Demand or need for security/ security appetite

The choice structuring properties of consumption

Response to crime threats: Need to respond to crime threats/ or anxieties about crime threats

Reassurance: Benefits of security/ social reassurance that security can provide

Resource/ financial constraints: Financial Constraints/ product price/ availability

Overall, the mixture of victimisation experience, perception of crime and isolation generate a demand for security. This finding resonates closely with recent work by Jackson and Gray (2010) and Jackson (2011) who identify how micro-narratives of risk and anxiety about crime drive individuals to take precautionary measures to protect against uncertainties or insecurities. For Jackson and Gray (2010:15) such anxieties create a functional from of worry that promotes 'motivating and problem solving activity'[16]. In the case of the businesses in the sample, most appear to adopt functional forms of worry,[17] which leads them to develop strategies for coping with crime- either through the consumption of physical security or the use of precautionary measures to prevent crime. Of course, the purchase of security was widely perceived as being able to reassure and promote feelings of safety. However, this reassurance function seemed to relate more closely to some products than others. Although, respondents clearly felt it important to install shutters and burglar alarms, it was clear that CCTV served a reassurance function greater than any other product. As Molotch (2004) suggests fear can create desirability of products and in the case of these businesses, CCTV was the most desired security object. Several authors have noted the value users place on CCTV in relation to crime control (see Barnard-Wills and Wells, 2012) and in the sample group the surveillance offered through CCTV was viewed as essential to personal safety and providing a sense of reassurance- as one respondent stated, 'it [CCTV] makes them [offenders] think again' (Interview 1). Indeed, as 'crime talk' (Loader, 2009) helped to promote a sense of anxiety, it was observed that such chatter often developed into 'security talk' where business might also discuss security issues. Although previous commentators have noted the development of 'security fetishism' in Western Societies (Spitzer, 1987), within the sample business, this security talk helped a form of 'CCTV fetishism' to develop. However, the desire for products such as CCTV had to be balanced with financial considerations. Financially, many of the businesses were struggling to survive, and although there was a desire for new state of the art security, many of these products were financially out of reach. Respondents commonly saw adverts for security/ CCTV systems in trade magazines and in interview many commented on their desirability. However, financial constraints meant they often had to resort to installing the cheapest possible options or second hand CCTV systems.

A complex relationship exists between notions of security, threats and how decisions to consume security are made. Through using Manunta and Manunta's (2006) security process theory and the concept of choice structuring properties as heuristic devices, this paper begins to identify the factors that shape the demand for security and decisions to consume within an under-researched sample group. As Haywood (2012:31) asserts 'most human decision making is (to a certain extent) the product of complex formations based around rational criteria'. In relation to this sample of business, the purchasing decisions in relation to security and the meanings attached to security are shaped by a degree of rationality, but one also has to be mindful of the personal capital invested and the emotional attachment that the respondents had to their businesses. Most owners had invested their finances and much of their lives into the business; the business location was also commonly the community where they lived and the business part of the family home. This might partially distinguish how security consumption decisions are made in such businesses as compared to larger multi-site enterprises where more 'remote' and rational decisions to consume security might be made. However, these possible distinctions require further exploration. Indeed, three other predominant themes raised in this paper also deserve greater scholarly focus. First, writers such as Jones (2012); Wood and Shearing (2007) and Hope (2000) have argued that the 'commodification' of security has generated an uneven distribution of securitization, with the wealthiest in society not only living in communities where they can physically and culturally distance themselves from crime risk, but they are now also able to purchase physical security, which further distances them from risk. Future research

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[16] Whereas dysfunctional worry leads to people withdrawing or disengaging with normal routine daily activities and this erodes well-being and quality of life.
[17] That said, some respondents did give examples of businesses owners who had considered selling the business as a result of crime victimisation of fear of victimisation- in such cases functional worry had become dysfunctional worry. For example, one respondent pointed to an article that appeared in the magazine 'Asian Trader' in October 2012 that reported on a shopkeeper who was traumatised after a robbery. Here the victim of the attack was too frightened to continue trading and had expressed a desire to sell his business.

might usefully explore if such an uneven distribution of security exists across the commercial sector- both geographically and according to other variables such as business type and size. Second, this research explored both the consumption of physical security and how precautionary security behaviours are also part of the security biographies of businesses. To date, research on consumption has primarily focused on the purchase of security objects. However, this paper identifies that other non-physical precautionary measures (such as closing early) are also used for security purposed by businesses. Thus, further work might usefully explore how both physical security and routine precautionary security are used within businesses and how such precautionary behaviours become integrated into businesses practices.   Finally,   this study is narrowly focused upon a small number of convenience stores within a neighbourhood of one city. Further questions need to be answered about how the micro level decisions to consume are influenced by macro level factors across other types of businesses within other geographical contexts. Thus research needs to explore whether the security consumption culture that was observed in the businesses in this study is also evident across other localities and business types.

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