

How necessary is CCTV in the retail industry?

As tough economic times get tougher, the retail industry will need to think carefully about how to reduce their risk in order to protect their shoppers, stock and their bottom line.

 By Laurence Smith 6 Feb 2020



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The benefits of a tailored CCTV and intelligent video management service make it possible for retailers, large or small, to reduce shoplifting and employee theft, while simultaneously creating a safer workplace and ensuring more efficient merchandising and store management processes.

Thanks to developments in image processing technology as well as Artificial Intelligence (AI), retailers can now utilise CCTV surveillance systems which offer a level of performance and value that would not have been previously possible.

What can security cameras and surveillance do for retailers?

Security guards can't be or see everywhere at once, but surveillance cameras can. An effective retail surveillance system needs a mix of ultra-high definition, pan-tilt-zoom cameras and thermal cameras, linked back to a central, intelligent Video Management System (VMS) in the control room.

Where foot or vehicle traffic is high, 4K cameras can provide sufficient detail during the day to be used in conjunction with AI-driven facial recognition as well as license plate recognition software, which is useful in providing evidence in the prosecution of retail crimes after the fact. For night-time crime hotspots, perimeters and parking lots, thermal cameras prove invaluable, giving a clear picture of the area no matter the time of day, lighting conditions or weather.

4K cameras that are capable of capturing and recording ultra-high definition footage in high-traffic areas in retail centres can give security operators visual control over exits, entrances and high-risk areas like banks, jewellery stores, loading and receiving bays and storage areas. Useful particularly in large open areas, the 4K camera's range reduces the overall number of cameras required to cover a larger area than is possible with regular HD cameras.

Furthermore, thanks to the detail in footage, retailers can eliminate and prosecute on employee theft and crack down on shoplifters and pick-pocketers by providing useful post-incident evidence.

Security operators will be able to spot cases of employee theft by observing and playing back recorded footage - with certain Network Video Recorders (NVRs) it's possible to overlay the till receipt onto the video footage captured as items are scanned in real-time. This cuts out the opportunity for employee theft, when cashiers pass high value items through a till system as a lower value item.

Creating a safer, more efficient workplace

In addition to deterring criminals, security cameras contribute to safer public spaces by monitoring employees and surveying the property for any safety risks. With regards to monitoring multiple camera feeds technology can lend humans a hand here, as smart video management systems driven by AI algorithms can also be used to create automated alerts that will be triggered if the smart analytics encounters predefined suspicious behaviour.

For example, a control room operator can be alerted of loitering individuals, or people who enter unauthorised zones or frequently show up in high-risk areas. With such analytics capabilities, camera feeds are automatically monitored for non-compliant behaviour that will require human intervention, which can make all the difference in responding quickly and appropriately to a crisis situation like an armed robbery.

Powerful tool

When resourcefully planned and effectively implemented, CCTV surveillance systems with fit-for-purpose security cameras can be a powerful tool that enhances security to prevent shoplifting, improve merchandising and optimise store layout for a better customer experience. All of which adds up to a safer experience for shoppers which is critical given the rising levels of retail-specific crimes, like pickpocketing, shoplifting and armed robberies taking place in malls and shopping centres across South Africa.

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