

Any more marketing opportunities from crime situation?

Apart from being held to ransom by security and insurance companies, are there any more marketing opportunities in the crime situation? Well, I think there is at least one big one and it has to do with these car guards we now see at every single shopping centre.

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#) 13 Oct 2009

It was a brilliant concept, let's face it, when someone suggested that we should start looking at our safety when we popped down to the local shops to pick up the paper, a loaf of bread and a litre of milk.

Victim of security

So, they got a whole lot of unemployed people, swore them in as deputies, gave them t-shirts and told the to look after our cars in exchange for tips.

Great idea and it worked well, I thought.

Then it dawned on me that, apart from being a victim of crime, I was now well and truly a victim of security. was being had. The buck was being passed and I was at the receiving end.

Because what the shopkeepers were telling me that they not only wanted my custom, my money but that they were going to contribute precisely sod-all to ensuring that I could do all this in relative safety.

I'm getting sick of it and I'm sure I'm not alone and what this boils down to is a wonderful marketing opportunity for those shopkeepers, hotel owners, parking garage operators who are being told by people like me that "if you want our patronage, then you are going to have to start assuring us that our cars are not going to get ripped off. You are going to have to start paying those t-shirted fellows to look after our cars. You are going to have to stop having your bread buttered on both sides."

Passing the buck

Surely it is not unreasonable to expect shopkeepers to do something about the safety of their customers and not just pass the buck?

In Cape Town a while back, I pulled in to the parking lot of an hotel. A wonderful hotel with equally wonderful service. Everything absolutely perfect. Except that as I drove in to the parking lot there was a huge sign telling me that if I wanted to be fool enough to park my car there, then I should not even dream about whinging if it got broken in to, damaged or stolen.

Well, that's how I read it. What it actually said was that standard: "Management bears no responsibility for loss or theft etc."

On the basis that first impressions are lasting impressions - despite the fact that this was a great hotel - the first impression teed me off no end.

Living in hope

Hopefully, as South Africa moves closer to a free market economy and competition begins to bite, we will start seeing some really creative marketing from hotels, shopping centres and parking garages.

Creative marketing in the form of big signs that say: “Welcome, your car is quite safe with us.”

And perhaps: “Please don't tip the parking lot guards, we pay them fat salaries to look after your car.”

Of course, I'm not that naïve as to think that those costs won't be passed onto the consumer. They will, but only until competition gets even tougher and, in addition to having to pay for parking security, the shopkeepers will have to start cutting prices as a further and completely natural, enticement to increase custom.

Right. Now, who's first? You'll get my business that's for sure.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

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