

Raising Crime Awareness through ‘Design Thinking’

Lancaster, United Kingdom

Background

Since the 1800’s, England became an industrialised country and experienced extensive urban growth, so sales associates chose this location to establish large stores. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the aim was to create the stores to entice customers through space, impressive architecture, interior design and the elegant display of merchandise. At the same time, the display techniques were growing to promote sales. Therefore, more retail equipment manufactured and supplied for displaying products in the stores. This large variation led the retail industry as that goods could be touched by the customers and they were not accessible only through retail assistant anymore (Whitaker, 2011). Since then due to this new differentiation, retailers have been experiencing a significant change of in their customer’s behaviour. Now the retailers are trying to give a brilliant shopping experience to their customers with more reason to increase the sale (Ebster, Garaus 2011). However, there are some restrictions to this strategy that afford excellent opportunities for shoplifters and opportunist criminals. Store design can be a fantastic and efficient tool to increase sales. Also, it could significantly increase the chance of retail crime. ‘The high street retailer’ is one of the large retailers in the United Kingdom that suffers of this problem. The question is how to minimise criminal activity in retail environments to reduce loss prevention and retail shrinkage by raising awareness through design thinking in this retailer.

Retail Crime

Retail crime is one of the most commonly committed crimes in the UK and £613 million the direct crime cost to the UK retail industry in 2015, and it was £603 million in 2014 (BCR, 2015). Shoplifting has the highest rate of retail crime in the United Kingdom.

Design Thinking: an alternative approach

Design thinking is fundamentally a human-centred innovation process that underlines the whole practice which includes observation, collaboration, learning, visualisation of ideas, concept prototyping, and concurrent business analysis, which eventually encourages creativity and innovation in an organisation (Lockwood, 2009).

Design against Crime through Design Thinking

Preventing crime is not a problem only for the police to think about and deal with; it also can be dealt with through design. Designers need to be focused on people who they design for, as well as people who they are designing against to prevent crime (Armitage, 2013). Crime brings a cost to individuals and retailers; it means anticipation of criminal costs, and the damage of criminal activities to the businesses and responding to crime (Home office, 2010). Designing against Crime and criminals' activities reduce the crime and damage of criminal actions through designing a service, strategy, learning package, environment or product that are appropriate for the situation. Design against crime is relatively new; the aim of this discipline is to prevent crime through design which commenced in the United Kingdom in 2000. Through design against crime thinking, designers need to consider the prevention at the starting point of a project; therefore, they can prevent crime from happening, or reduce the opportunities for criminal behaviour (Gamman, Thorpe, 2006). David Kester, chief executive of the Design Council, says, ‘Anticipating and preventing crime is a constant challenge, perhaps even acute in a changing economic climate. That’s why we need to bring the best of our creative, technological and entrepreneurial talents together to find new solutions and stay ahead of the game.’

Design and Behavioural Change

Changing a society means changing behaviour, problems and issues; therefore, it is necessary to think and comprehend the issues differently; to think through something is to understand, to grasp and to figure it out, and for this, the main thing is to contemplate the audience that need to be targeted. For a significant and meaningful change, a specific message needs to be addressed to specific audience. A successful result comes from an effective design process that clearly shows what is needed and how to manage the process and approach the goal. Action and result on behaviour change can be a new relationship between people and organisations and communities. This can be attained by creating new effective structures of engagement to imply use of new tools and resources in the organisations (Lockwood,2009).

Aims and Methods

The research focuses on ‘The High Street Retailer’ to identifying retail crime, including customer theft, counterfeiting and fraud to reduce opportunistic crime through design thinking techniques. As the aim of the research is to analyse specific issues within the boundaries of a particular environment or organisation case studies method has been identified as the most appropriate method to explore the issues. Due to the large scale of the research investigation, the different departments and sections is observed step by step concerning layout and design to see how they function based on security aspects and floor staff activities and customer serving. Also, how staff adhere to security procedures and how customer behaves during their shopping process. The rationale underpinning this research area is based on empirical evidence; in the first stage, empirical method of the research investigation enable this study to achieve invaluable knowledge with observation and diary for the efficient recording of the environment, people, behaviours and relations. In the next stage, the research method uses a qualitative study approach to identify the core issues, through focus interviews in ‘The High Street Retailer’ to have direct interaction with contributors, to collect their opinions based on their experience and knowledge. Prototyping is conducted to participate in design through personal and group engagement.

Outcome

Concept 1, Retail Crime Learning Package: The suggested concepts is to combine two methods of learning, including an auditory and visual technique to make it more motivating and engaging. This concept is based on the flash cards including question and visual answer cards. The concept has been tested through several workshops with over 100 members of staff, and the results showed that this method made the staff get engaged in a fun atmosphere. At the end of the session it was clear that employees had a better understanding about retail crime and what they need to do to prevent crime.

Concept 2, Digital Platform: ‘The High Street Retailer’ lacks a platform regarding communication and connection between staff and the management team. The only existing channel of communication is a platform for booking holidays and staff boards displayed throughout the corridors. The suggestion is to use this opportunity to establish a digital platform for the employees for two purposes; first embedding ‘retail crime visual learning session’ into it to allow staff to become more engaged and share their experiences with members of staff. Secondly, this platform can be used for other channels such as Health and Safety compliancy and other company procedures. By logging in and using the website for different purposes, staff are indicated to watch the retail crime pictures and processes constantly, where are situated in the home page.



Figure 1: Enticing department store, (Luxury Lifestyle Magazine, 2017)

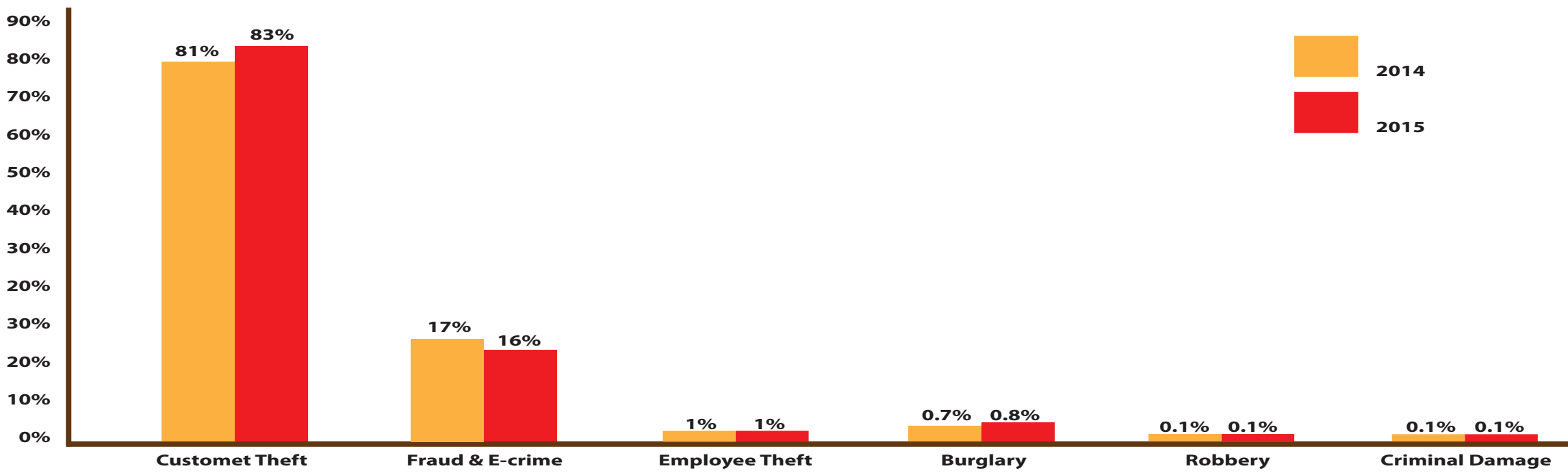


Figure 2: Retail crime by percentage of incidents 2014-15 (BRC, 2015)

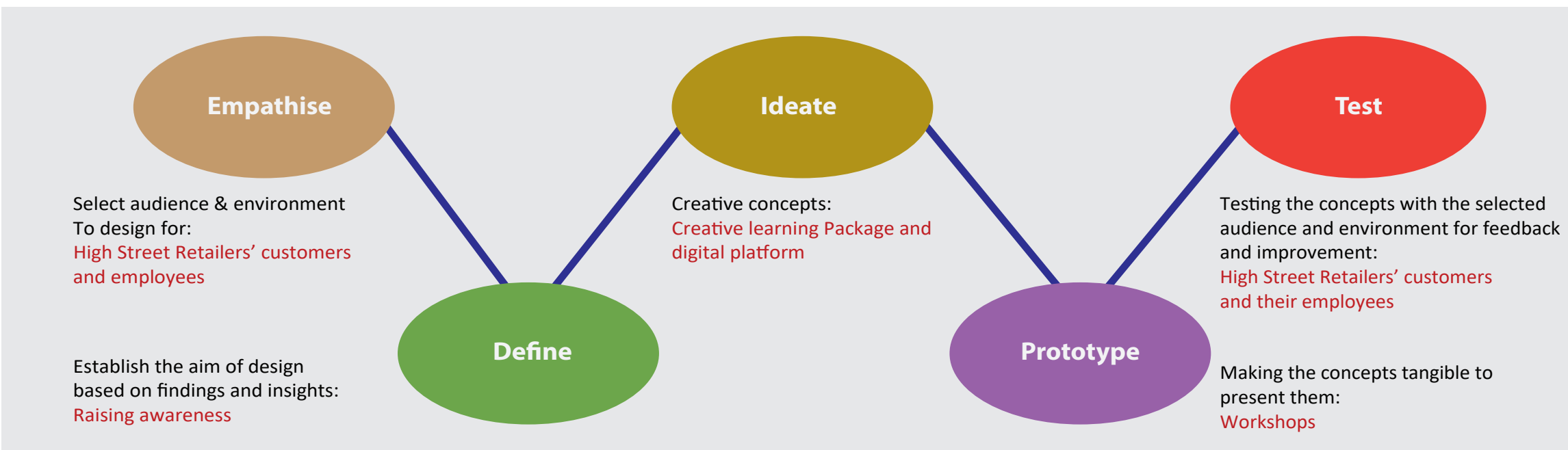


Figure 3: The phase of design thinking, (Authors own)

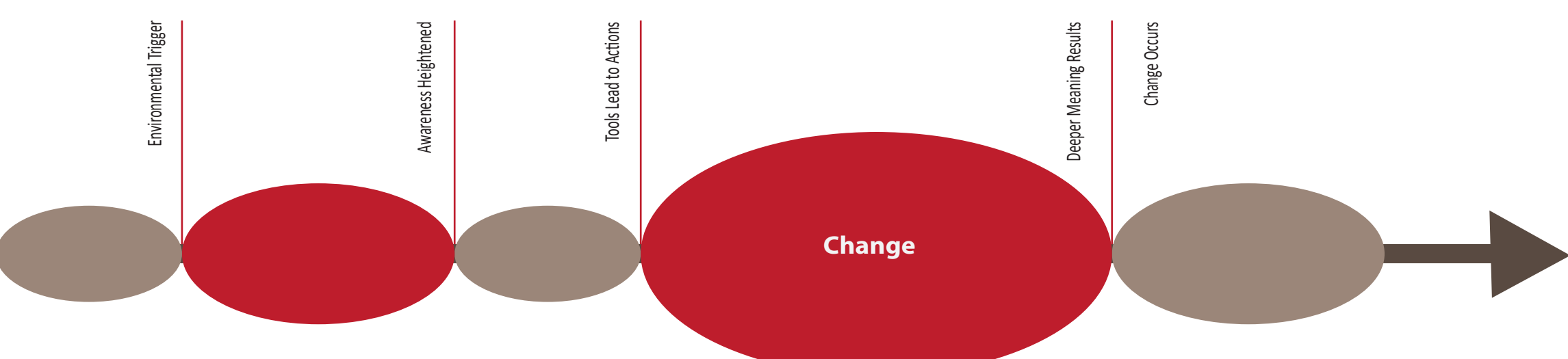


Figure 4: Behaviour change through design, (Johnnyholland.org, 2014)



Figure 5: Shoplifting, (Authors own)



Figure 6: Digital platform, (Authors own)



Figure 7: Learning package, (Sales training, 2017)



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