

## ESQUIRE BAG COLLECTION

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>CNE Tech Ltd. &amp; Esquire Collection Ltd</b>
<b>Trigger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public concern about pick-pocketing.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To design and develop a crime resistant bag.</li> </ul>
<b>Tools/ Techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information collected from crime investigator, victims of crime and customers.</li> <li>Alteration of designs based on feedback from tests.</li> <li>Market tested using a small batch of bags.</li> </ul>
<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertisements fuelled interest in the approach.</li> <li>Collaborative approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Tensions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different methods of pick-pocketing have to be understood.</li> <li>The sensor damaged the bag initially.</li> <li>Fashions changes quickly.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production promotion efforts attracted support.</li> <li>Sales of the bags increased for the anti-theft version.</li> <li>Potentially reduces pick-pocketing.</li> <li>Developed a fashion and safety image.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research into different methods of pick-pocketing is essential.</li> <li>Collaboration with partner companies required.</li> <li>Using the 'Fashion and Safety' concept pays off.</li> <li>Quality and design are also important to customers.</li> </ul>

### Synopsis

This case outlines research conducted in Korea during the development of an 'anti-theft handbag' by CNE Tech Co. Limited, a provider of patented alarm sensors, and the Esquire Collection Co. Limited. The companies worked together in order to develop a crime prevention alarm capable of being fitted into a handbag, thus protecting its owner from being a victim of pickpockets. The alarm was inserted into a stylish leather bag, chosen for its popularity with a range of customers and its supple/flexible material. Designed to go off when the surface of the bag was slashed, the alarm protected its owner from being the victim of 'bag-ripping', where a razorblade is used to cut a hole in the bag. The 'anti-theft bag' has increased sales and significantly improved the company's image.

## Background to Esquire Bags

Figures from the Korean Institute of Criminology (1998) crime Victimization survey show that the vast majority of crimes are committed either in the subway, on the bus or during travel on public transportation (36.2%) or in the markets, department stores and retail shops (29.8%). According to investigator Youn-Soo Oh, Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, pick-pocketing on public transportation or in the street is called the 'ground-strike', with the prevalent types being:

- (i.) 'Bag-pluck' - opening the bag by the button or zipper to steal a wallet.
- (ii.) 'Bag-rip' - swiftly cutting the bag with a knife. Once a target is selected, a thief is able to steal the wallet within 3 seconds.



*Figures 1 and 2: Bag plucking (left) and bag rip (right)*

Whilst a novice pickpocket can easily perform 'bag plucking', 'bag ripping' is far harder and requires more experience to execute. The opportunities for bag plucking depend upon the design of the bag. When bags with long shoulder straps were fashionable in Seoul, resulting in the bag falling to the waistline, a lot more incidents of pick-pocketing were recorded. According to Youn-Soo:

"It was elementary for even the beginners to steal a wallet by a 'bag-pluck', due to the location of the bag along the waistline".

In 1997, when the fashion brought in the bags with shorter straps resulting in the bag hanging under the arm, levels of crime suddenly declined, as more experience was required:

"Only the 'bag-rip' method can be used with bags that hang under the arm. To execute such technique, a perpetrator must be an experienced pick-pocket. They would have to have at least 3 to 4 years experience in the field" (Youn-Soo).

When the backpack and sac-like bags came into the fashion, the amount of pick-pocketing again increased, as this made crime very easy:

"It was effortless to open the button or the wallet itself from the back, and also so simple to unzip or incise using the blade from the side to steal the item of interest" (Youn-Soo).

The criminals learn to recognise types of bag that are easier to pick-pocket, and such designs are targeted. The following factors influence vulnerability to crime:

- Type of material - vinyl is more vulnerable.
- Where the bag hangs on the body – bags that come down to the waistline should be avoided as they are an easy target for criminals.
- The thickness of the sides of the bag is important, as this impacts on the direction and likely success of an incision. Some sides of a bag may be delicate and therefore need to be strengthened.
- Bigger bags are easier to pickpocket than smaller bags
- Setting the sides of the bag to prevent a wallet being extracted or two fingers being inserted increases security.

Youn-Soo would like designers to be aware of the relationship between bag design and the number of crimes. She was therefore delighted to offer advice when CNE Tech Ltd. and Esquire Collection Ltd collaborated in the development of an anti-theft bag. Thus, with assistance from the Korea Police Committee, the various methods of pick-pocketing were investigated by CNE Tech. This case study is based on interviews Youn-Soo, Seoul Metropolitan Police and the design teams from CNE Tech and Esquire.

## **Design Process**

### **Concept**

The company then set about developing an alarm sensor designed to protect the bag from bag ripping. Once developed, the patent was sold to the Esquire Collection and the two companies worked together to perfect the design.

### **Development**

According to Esquire's marketing manager, Kwang-Pyo Lee, the bag chosen for the experiment had to be amongst the existing Esquire product range. It must be capable of being easily adapted to the sensor system and should appeal to women of all ages, from those in their 40s interested in the anti-theft device to those in their 20s seeking individuality and a chic image. Eun-Mi Hong from the Merchandise Planning Team and Designer Hyun-Kyung Cho also assisted in choosing the bag in which to install the sensor/alarm device. It was decided that the alarm should be inserted into a stylish leather bag, chosen for its popularity with a range of customers and its supple/flexible material.

### **Modifications**

The consumer spokesperson and the retailers held regular meetings to inform the type, shape material and condition for the anti-theft bags. As a result, the bag was modified using wire to prevent there being a 5-cm gap, through which a wallet could be stolen. In addition, thicker leather was chosen to make slashing more difficult and the location of the zipper moved towards the back to make it harder to access.

Difficulties were encountered in installing the sensor device into bag, however. After

discussions with victims of crime and further research into the incision blade method used by pickpockets, the company was able to identify the location of the cut and adjust the alarm accordingly, with a netted sensor being chosen. This reduced the likelihood of a bag-cutting in the first place and prevented the alarm from falling out if an incision was made.

### **Customer Feedback**

Esquire Collection also gathered consumer opinions using retail store surveys. Based on this feedback, the bag was redesigned to eliminate the discomfort caused by the sensor and prevent any alteration in shape arising from the device falling out during the crime. After the product launch, it was found that the delicacy of the sensor's wiring resulted in a tendency for them to break. To solve the problem, a pouch for the alarm was made and the sensor was effectively arranged inside the leather.



*Figure 3: Pouch to prevent the alarm from falling out*

### **Marketing**

The design team decided to manufacture only 5% of the whole production as 'Anti-theft' purses/bag, due to concerns about its popularity.



*Figure 4: Tag identifying an anti-theft bag*

These bags are identified by a tag, but otherwise look the same as the company's other bags.



*Figure 5: Full range of Esquire anti-theft bags*

Esquire marketed itself as a company concerned about the safety of its consumers, rather than simply a fashion designer, as a representative explains:

“It is very difficult to transform a fashion apparel to a technical product. There's a tendency for the trend to change seasonally. Accordingly, if we concentrate too much on the technical side, it is very possible to exhaust our long-lived brand characteristic. So we prudently marketed the product when we advertised the 'Anti-Theft' bag with 'Fashion and Safety' concept.”

### **Impact**

The company received an excellent response from former victims of pick-pocketing, as well as from middle-aged and older consumers. Compared to the identical design without the alarm device, the 'Anti-Theft' design's marketing volume increased 10%. The image of the Esquire Collection Company improved from the 'Anti-theft Bag/Purse' concept. The company's product design was selected as the Daily Sports hit-product of the year. CNE Tech's co-operation with Esquire enabled them to develop an anti-theft bag and begin marketing the product in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

## Lessons Learned

This case study illustrates the value of cooperation between the patent carrier and manufacturer of products, as well as thorough analysis of crime methods and market research. It shows that it is possible for designers to combine 'fashion and safety' and those efforts are appreciated by consumers, who are attracted to such products.

## References, Related Case Studies and Further Reading

Central St. Martins (2001) *'In the Bag'*. CD-Rom.

Korean Institute of Criminology (1998). *Criminal Victimization in Korea*.

Korean Institute of Criminology (1996) *Sexual Violence in Korea*.

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## Classification Index

Ekblom's crime classification	Misappropriation
BCS crime classification	Theft
DAC	Product protection
Primary motivation	Benefits customer and improves products
Type of designer	Technical
Approach	Alarm
Sector	Fashion/retail
Location	Bag
Author	Sunju Kim, Senior Researcher Embrain Co., LTD.

DAC Bag Esquire