

## Top store hits back at "wardrobing"

9<sup>th</sup> October, 2013



An upmarket chain of U.S. department stores has taken action to stop people buying expensive clothes, wearing them once and then returning them for a refund. About 65 per cent of U.S. retailers reported they have been victims of this practice, known as "wardrobing". This form of "return fraud" costs the retail industry an

estimated \$8.8 billion a year. The store, Bloomingdale's, has started attaching large, black, hard-to-hide tags to the bottom of dresses that cost over \$150. The garment cannot be returned if the tag is missing. This means anyone thinking they can have a "free dress rental" might have to think again. The tag means they would be advertising the fact at their party that they are wardrobing.

Retail analyst Hitha Prabhakar explained how serious wardrobing was, saying: "What people don't realize is that it's an illegal process." Wardrobing has become such a problem that Bloomingdale's has decided to risk annoying and potentially losing customers in an effort to deter it. They have, in effect, let go a little of the sales mantra that "the customer is always right". Some Bloomingdale's customers believe the tags make them feel dishonest, while others think it's a long overdue solution to unscrupulous shoppers. The National Retail Federation said: "It's a delicate balance of loss prevention and good customer service, and the relationship has to be handled with appropriate finesse."

Sources: ABC News / Businessweek

### Writing

People who do wardrobing should be arrested and punished. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

upmarket / department stores / refunds / retailers / victims / garment / advertising / serious / illegal / annoying / dishonest / solution / balance / customer service

### True / False

- A market in a department store is selling wardrobes fraudulently. T / F
- People buy clothes just to wear them once and then get a refund. T / F
- The store Bloomingdale's loses around \$8.8 billion a year. T / F
- If a Bloomingdale's dress has a black tag missing, there is no refund. T / F
- Wardrobing is illegal. T / F
- Bloomingdale's isn't prepared to lose customers because of wardrobing. T / F
- All Bloomingdale's customers are angry about the tags on dresses. T / F
- Stopping wardrobing and keeping customers happy isn't so easy. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. upmarket    | a. discourage    |
| 2. refund      | b. deception     |
| 3. fraud       | c. fraudulent    |
| 4. garment     | d. tricky        |
| 5. think again | e. outfit        |
| 6. realize     | f. luxury        |
| 7. illegal     | g. understand    |
| 8. deter       | h. reimbursement |
| 9. delicate    | i. skill         |
| 10. finesse    | j. reconsider    |

### Discussion – Student A

- Do you think Bloomingdale's actions will be successful?
- Is the customer (including you) always right?
- Everyone has to pay higher prices because of 'wardrobers'. Is this fair?
- What else can stores do to stop 'wardrobers'?
- How should stores maintain the delicate balance mentioned at the end of the article?
- Do stores have to tread carefully with customers who are unhappy?
- Is wardrobing the same as illegally downloading music?
- What questions would you like to ask Hitha Prabhakar?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. An upmarket chain                   | a. solution                  |
| 2. returning them                      | b. that they are wardrobing. |
| 3. an estimated                        | c. an effort to deter it     |
| 4. The garment cannot be returned      | d. for a refund              |
| 5. advertising the fact at their party | e. with appropriate finesse  |
| 6. Prabhakar explained how             | f. of U.S. department stores |
| 7. losing customers in                 | g. balance                   |
| 8. it's a long overdue                 | h. if the tag is missing     |
| 9. It's a delicate                     | i. \$8.8 billion             |
| 10. the relationship has to be handled | j. serious wardrobing was    |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How bad do you think wardrobing is?
- What do you think of 'wardrobers'?
- Should stores stop issuing refunds?
- Why do people buy something and then take it back?
- Is the black-tag idea a good one?
- Have you ever asked for a refund?
- Would you ever try wardrobing (for clothes or anything else)?

## Spelling

- An armupekt chain of U.S. department stores
- About 65 per cent of U.S. ealrisetr
- an ietsmeadt \$8.8 billion a year
- hnctigtaa large, black, hard-to-hide tags
- The aetnrmg cannot be returned
- they would be sirndtgvaie the fact
- tipeolantiy losing customers
- sales mntraa
- it's a long overdue onoutsli
- cusuoplsrunu shoppers
- a ldectiae balance
- handled with ptapioraepr finesse

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. h	3. b	4. e	5. j
6. g	7. c	8. a	9. d	10. i

## Role Play

### Role A – Wardrobing

You think wardrobing is the biggest problem for stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their problems. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to resolve of these (and why): shoplifting, unstylish garments are or high prices.

### Role B – Shoplifting

You think shoplifting is the biggest problem for stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their problems. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to resolve of these (and why): wardrobing, unstylish garments are or high prices.

### Role C – Unstylish garments

You think unstylish garments are the biggest problem for stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their problems. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to resolve of these (and why): shoplifting, wardrobing or high prices.

### Role D – High prices

You think high prices are the biggest problem for stores. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their problems. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to resolve (and why): shoplifting, unstylish garments are or wardrobing.

## Speaking - Stores

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put your favourite at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| • clothes shops | • coffee shops           |
| • sports shops  | • electrical goods shops |
| • book stores   | • car showrooms          |
| • bakeries      | • fast food restaurants  |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.