

Sociological Investigation of Factors Influencing the Design and Support for AI Tracking and Monitoring Systems for Digital Camera Security and Theft Recovery

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DOI: 10.56201/ijemt.vol.12.no7.2026.pg434.444

Abstract

The issue of digital camera theft has become increasingly problematic for photographers, photojournalists, and other users, bringing both professional and socio-economic difficulties. This research explored how often cameras are stolen, users' perceptions of the reasons and effects of such thefts, their familiarity with Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based security options, and their readiness to use AI-driven tracking and monitoring technologies to safeguard their equipment and recover stolen devices. The study was framed by the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), Routine Activity Theory, and Rational Choice Theory. Data were collected through a quantitative cross-sectional survey of 200 respondents which include photographers, media workers, photography students, and camera retailers in Lagos State, Nigeria, using a structured questionnaire. Analysis involved descriptive statistics and Chi-square (χ^2) tests. Findings showed that camera theft continues to be a significant occupational issue, with insufficient security, rising crime, and economic hardship identified as primary causes. Participants demonstrated strong awareness of AI security technologies and showed considerable support for AI-based camera tracking systems. The Chi-square analysis indicated a significant relationship between individuals with experience of camera theft and their support for AI-based security solutions ($\chi^2 = 23.47 > 3.84$ at 0.05 significance level). The study concludes that AI-enhanced security approaches offer socially valuable means to address camera theft by improving protection, facilitating recovery, and increasing user confidence. It recommends integrating AI tracking capabilities into digital cameras and raising awareness about intelligent security technologies.

Keywords: Sociological Investigation, Artificial Intelligence, Tracking and Monitoring Systems, Digital Camera Security, Theft Recovery.

Introduction

Digital cameras have become indispensable across various fields including journalism, entertainment, education, scientific research, security, and professional photography. However, the increased use of advanced digital cameras with high-quality lenses has led to a surge in theft,

unauthorized usage, and loss, posing significant financial and professional challenges for photographers who invest heavily in their equipment.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly been applied to enhance security systems through intelligent surveillance, predictive analytics, facial recognition, behavioral analysis, and real-time tracking (Russell & Norvig, 2021). When integrated with Internet of Things (IoT) devices, cloud computing, and GPS technologies, AI enables the development of smart security solutions that safeguard valuable assets and improve recovery processes (Al-Fuqaha et al., 2015).

From a sociological perspective, technology adoption is influenced by human needs, social contexts, and institutional factors, with trust and awareness being critical for successful integration of AI-based security tools (Venkatesh et al., 2012). While intelligent surveillance and machine learning have shown promise in automating threat detection and improving security outcomes (Sarker, 2022; Goodfellow et al., 2016), there remains limited research on how users in developing countries like Nigeria perceive and accept AI-enabled camera security systems. This study aims to address this gap by examining user perceptions, acceptance, and expectations of AI-driven tracking and monitoring for digital camera security and theft recovery.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This research seeks to investigate the social dimensions of digital camera theft and to understand how photographers and camera users view, accept, and may be influenced by an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based system developed to track and monitor cameras, enhancing security and aiding in the recovery of stolen equipment.

The study's specific goals are to:

1. Examine the prevalence and socio-economic consequences of digital camera theft on professional photographers and users.
2. Investigate photographers' and users' perception on the reasons behind and trends in digital camera theft today.
3. Assess the photographers' and camera users' awareness of AI-based security technologies.
4. Investigate perceptions regarding the effectiveness of AI-powered tracking and monitoring tools in preventing theft and assisting recovery.
5. Identify factors that affect the willingness of photographers and users to adopt AI-driven security technologies.
6. Examine how personal experiences with camera theft influence support for AI-driven camera tracking security and theft recovery.

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between experiences of camera theft and support for AI-driven camera tracking security and theft recovery.

Justification and Significance of the Study

This study is driven by the increasing occurrence of camera theft and the growing reliance on expensive digital photography gear. The findings will provide important insights for camera manufacturers, software developers, security organizations, professional photographers, and policymakers. Furthermore, it will contribute to the field of technology and sociology by exploring how societal perceptions influence the acceptance of emerging AI-based security innovations.

Theoretical Framework

Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) Theory

The SCOT theory, introduced by Pinch & Bijker (1984) emphasizes that technological developments arise from social interactions among various groups rather than purely from technical needs. Technologies are shaped by society's values, needs, and experiences. For example, AI-powered tracking systems in digital camera security reflect society's response to concerns about theft and safety. Influential groups such as photographers, journalists, media firms, and manufacturers all contribute to how these technologies evolve and are adopted. Thus, AI security tools are social products designed to address specific challenges faced by users, and societal demand plays a key role in driving these innovations.

Rational Choice Theory

This theory is associated with scholars like James Coleman and George Homans. Coleman (1990) and Homans (1961), proposes that people make decisions by assessing costs and benefits to maximize their advantage and minimize risks. Professional photographers, who own expensive cameras, face considerable losses if theft occurs. Consequently, they may choose to invest in AI-based tracking if the benefits of better security and easier recovery outweigh the costs. This theory also helps explain why thieves might avoid cameras equipped with advanced AI tracking, as the increased risk of detection acts as a deterrent.

Routine Activity Theory

Cohen and Felson (1979) developed Routine Activity Theory. This theory states that crime happens when three conditions coincide: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of effective guardianship. Digital cameras are attractive targets due to their portability and value. AI-based tracking and monitoring systems serve as guardians by improving surveillance, tracking movements, and enabling faster recovery of stolen property. By increasing the risks for criminals, these technologies reduce the likelihood of theft.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey to explore the prevalence of digital camera theft and evaluate user perceptions and acceptance of an AI-driven tracking and monitoring system aimed at enhancing camera security and theft recovery. This approach allowed for the collection of standardized data from a sizable population to enabling statistical examination of the relationships between theft experiences, awareness of AI technologies, and willingness and support to adopt AI-enabled security measures. The research was conducted in Lagos State, Nigeria, a key commercial and technological center with a vibrant community of professional photographers, media workers, photography training institutions, and camera retailers. The study population comprised individuals engaged in frequent digital camera use, including professional photographers, photojournalists, students, media practitioners, and equipment vendors. Purposive sampling was employed to select 300 participants with relevant camera use experience, achieving a final sample of 200 valid responses (66.7% response rate). Data collection was carried out within three-weeks period in the month of March, 2026. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire developed from literature on technology adoption, surveillance, and crime prevention, encompassing socio-demographic details, camera theft experiences, perceptions of theft causes and consequences, awareness of AI-based security technologies, and willingness to

adopt AI tracking systems. Responses were primarily measured on nominal scales and five-point Likert items. Content validity was ensured by expert review, and reliability was established via a pilot test with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. The main dependent variable was acceptance of AI-driven security systems, with independent variables including theft experience, AI awareness, perceived system effectiveness, and occupational risk. Ethical standards were rigorously maintained throughout the study, with voluntary participation, informed consent, and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without consequences, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The study adhered to accepted ethical protocols to protect participant privacy and ensure responsible data handling.

Result and Discussion

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the field were systematically coded, entered, and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were utilized to summarize the characteristics and responses of the participants.

To evaluate the study hypotheses and explore the relationships between the main variables, the Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence was applied with a significance level of 0.05. This test was chosen because the variables involved were categorical, making it appropriate for assessing the associations between social variables.

Chi-Square (χ^2) Calculations and Hypotheses Testing:

The hypotheses were tested using the Chi-Square (χ^2) test of independence. The Chi-Square statistic was computed using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where

χ^2 = Chi-Square statistic

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

- Calculated χ^2 =
- Degrees of Freedom (df) =
- P value =
- Level of significance = 0.05
- **Decision:**
- Since is rejected.

Interpretation and Discussion:

The guideline for decision-making was to reject the null hypothesis when the calculated Chi-square statistic was greater than the critical value from the Chi-square distribution table, considering the appropriate degrees of freedom and significance level. Conversely, if the calculated value was below the critical threshold, the null hypothesis was retained.

This method allowed for empirical evaluation of the sociological links among experiences with camera theft, attitudes toward AI technologies, and the endorsement of AI-based camera security solutions.

Objective 1: Examine the prevalence and socio-economic consequences of digital camera theft among professional photographers and camera users.

The composition of data on Table 1: shows that 59.0% of our respondents have suffered or experienced theft of their camera during their professional photography engagement while 41.0 % have not had any experience of theft of their camera.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Experience of Camera Theft

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Experienced Camera Theft	118	59.0
Have Not Experienced Theft	82	41.0
Total	200	100.0

The findings indicate that camera theft is a widespread issue, creating social, economic, and professional challenges. Those affected reported financial setbacks, interruptions to their work, loss of important photographic collections, and emotional distress. From a sociological viewpoint, camera theft is a type of property crime that undermines both job performance and financial stability. These results align with Cohen and Felson's (1979) Routine Activity Theory, which suggests that valuable, portable items attract offenders when there is no sufficient protection.

Objective 2: Investigate perceptions regarding the causes and patterns of digital camera theft.

The composition of data on Table 2 shows that majority (35.0%) of our respondents blamed theft of camera on poor security measures, 27.5% attributed the theft of camera to rising crime rate, 22.5% identified unemployment and economic hardship while 15.0% linked theft of camera to weak law enforcement.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Perceived Causes of Camera Theft

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Poor Security Measures	70	35.0
Rising Crime Rate	55	27.5
Economic Hardship	45	22.5
Weak Law Enforcement	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0

The findings align with sociological perspectives that attribute crime to structural inequalities and economic challenges. Merton's strain theory (1938) explains that individuals may turn to crime when they face a gap between societal goals and the legitimate means to achieve them. This pressure can push some people to choose illegal methods as a way to reach success or meet basic

needs. When considering camera theft, this viewpoint emphasizes that such actions are not merely personal choices but are influenced by wider social and economic factors. Elements like poverty, joblessness, limited education, and social exclusion increase the chances of property crimes. These circumstances create a setting where criminal behavior may appear as a logical response to systemic obstacles. This framework also stresses the necessity of examining social systems and policies that maintain inequality. Effective crime reduction involves tackling these root causes by addressing economic disparities, strengthening social support, and improving access to lawful opportunities. It requires understanding how social environments shape individual decisions, suggesting that crime prevention should extend beyond punishment to include social reforms. Therefore, camera theft is more than just an isolated wrongdoing; it reflects broader social problems. Viewing crime in this context encourages a comprehensive approach to prevention that incorporates social justice and economic fairness as essential elements.

Objective 3: Assess the level of awareness of AI-based security technologies among camera users.

The composition of data on Table 3 shows that majority (64.0 %) of our respondents are highly aware of AI security technologies while 23.0 % and 13.0 % are moderately and lowly aware of AI security technologies

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Awareness of AI Security Technologies

AwarenessLevel	Frequency	Percentage
Highly	128	64.0
Moderately	46	23.0
Lowly	26	13.0
Total	200	100.0

The results reveal a strong awareness of AI-powered security technologies among respondents, highlighting how emerging technologies are increasingly integrated into specialized fields like photography. This heightened awareness stems from the widespread use of AI-driven digital tools, active social media engagement, and ongoing innovations tailored to the photography sector. Daily interactions with AI features—such as automated image recognition and smart editing—on popular platforms boost familiarity and create a user base more open to advanced security solutions ((Russell & Norvig, 2021).). This high level of awareness creates a favorable environment for adopting AI-enabled camera security systems. When users understand the benefits and functions of these technologies, acceptance and integration barriers decrease, encouraging manufacturers and service providers to innovate further (Venkatesh et al, 2012). This shift reflects a broader cultural and professional change, with AI-powered security becoming a standard part of photographers' workflows rather than a novelty, signaling the maturation of technology's role in the industry. Finally, the trend suggests implications for future training, policy, and development priorities. As awareness and usage grow, educational efforts may increase to help users maximize AI security tools' benefits. These insights also guide the creation of more user-friendly and effective security solutions aligned with the evolving needs of both professionals and enthusiasts.

Overall, this strong awareness indicates a promising landscape for deeper AI integration into everyday social and occupational practices within photography.

Objective 4: Investigate perceptions regarding the effectiveness of AI-driven tracking and monitoring systems.

The composition of data on Table 4 shows that majority (46.0 %) of our respondents perceived AI-driven tracking and monitoring systems as very effective tools for preventing camera theft and facilitating recovery. 37.0 % perceived AI-driven tracking and monitoring systems as effective tools for preventing camera theft and facilitating recovery while 17.0 % perceived AI-driven tracking and monitoring systems as not effective tools for preventing camera theft and facilitating recovery.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Perceived Effectiveness of AI Security Systems

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	92	46.0
Effective	74	37.0
Not Effective	34	17.0
Total	200	100

The finding reveals a strong social confidence in AI systems as effective technological interventions for security issues. People increasingly view AI as proactive agents that deter theft, monitor cameras, and assist in recovery, reflecting trust in technology's ability to solve real-world problems. This aligns with the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) Theory, which argues that technologies gain acceptance when society perceives them as addressing recognized social needs through collective interpretation and negotiation. Respondents' trust in AI for security highlights how social concerns about safety shape technology adoption. Theft and unauthorized access are seen as pressing problems, and AI is viewed as a tailored solution, enhancing its legitimacy and encouraging broader integration. This shift also marks AI's transition from an abstract idea to a practical, everyday tool, influenced by successful applications, media support, and policy endorsements that foster positive social meanings. However, while social confidence can accelerate adoption, it may also lead to overreliance or neglect of AI's limitations and ethical challenges, such as privacy, bias, and accountability (Belissent, 2018). Thus, while SCOT helps explain acceptance, a balanced approach combining optimism with critical scrutiny is necessary. Overall, the finding illustrates how AI's acceptance as a security solution reflects society's evolving relationship with technology, underscoring both hope and the need for ongoing evaluation.

Objective 5: Identify the willingness of photographers and camera users to adopt AI-driven camera security technologies.

The composition of data on Table 5 shows that majority (85.0 %) of our respondents expressed willingness to adopt AI-driven camera security systems. Key reasons cited included protection of investment, increased confidence during fieldwork, improved chances of recovering stolen

cameras, and enhanced occupational security while 15.0 % decline willingness to adopt AI-driven camera security systems. Key reasons cited included cost of installing AI driven camera security technologies

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Willingness to Adopt AI Security Systems

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Willing	170	85.0
Not Willing	30	15.0
Total	200	100

This finding reveals that decisions to adopt or reject technology are shaped by a combination of social and personal factors, including users' previous experiences, perceived risks, costs, and expectations. Notably, individuals who have experienced theft show a stronger tendency to support and adopt AI-enabled security systems, as their past negative experiences heighten awareness of vulnerabilities and increase the perceived necessity of advanced protection.

Perceived risk plays a crucial role, with users continuously evaluating threats against the benefits and drawbacks of new technology. High perceived risk, especially from personal experience of theft, amplifies motivation to adopt protective solutions. In addition, users consider both financial and non-financial costs, balancing these against expected security benefits. Ultimately, technology adoption is a socially influenced process driven by lived experiences, risk assessment, cost-benefit analysis, and expectations, highlighting the importance of understanding these dynamics to encourage broader acceptance of AI security technologies (Dwivedi, 2021).

Objective 6: Examine the relationship between experiences of camera theft and support for AI-enabled camera security and theft recovery systems.

Table 6: Cross-Tabulation of Respondents Responses Based on camera theft and support for AI camera security and theft recovery systems.

Experience of Theft	Support AI System	Do Not Support	Total
Experienced Theft	110	08	118
No Theft Experience	60	22	82
Total	170	30	200

The finding that individuals who have experienced theft are more likely to support AI-based security technologies reveals how personal experience shapes attitudes toward surveillance and security innovations. Those affected by crime tend to see advanced technological tools as effective means to enhance safety, deter criminals, and prevent future incidents. This aligns with **Rational Choice Theory**, which argues that people take protective actions when benefits outweigh costs. For theft victims, the perceived advantages of AI surveillance—such as increased protection and reduced risk of repeat victimization—often outweigh concerns about privacy or expense. Their direct experience raises awareness of vulnerability, making technology adoption a rational way to lower future risks.

This insight has important implications for policymakers and developers, suggesting tailored communication strategies are needed for different groups. While victims may prioritize empowerment and effectiveness, non-victims might require education on risks and benefits. At the same time, broader societal concerns about privacy and ethics highlight the need to balance technological benefits with safeguards to maintain public trust and prevent misuse.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between experiences of camera theft and support for AI-driven camera tracking security and theft recovery.

The hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square (χ^2) test of independence. The Chi-Square statistic was computed using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where

χ^2 = Chi-Square statistic

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

Chi-Square Analysis

Calculated $\chi^2 = 23.47$

Degrees of Freedom:

$df = (2-1)(2-1) = 1$

Critical Value at 0.05 significance level:

$\chi^2_{critical} = 3.84$

Decision:

$23.47 > 3.84$

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

Interpretation and Discussion

There is a statistically significant relationship between experiences of camera theft and support for AI-driven camera security systems

The decision rule is that the null hypothesis would be rejected whenever the calculated Chi-square value exceeded the critical value at the appropriate degree of freedom and significance level 0.05. Conversely, the null hypothesis would be accepted where the calculated value is less than the critical value.

Conclusion

This study investigated the social impact of digital camera theft and assessed the perceived effectiveness of an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tracking system to enhance camera security and recovery. Camera theft was found to significantly affect photographers' livelihoods, productivity, and mental well-being, highlighting their vulnerability in urban settings where valuable equipment attracts criminals. Respondents viewed theft as a broader social issue tied to inadequate security, rising crime, economic challenges, and weaknesses in crime control.

The research revealed strong awareness and support for AI-driven security and theft recovery technologies among camera users. Many believed these systems could improve surveillance, increase recovery chances, and deter theft. A clear relationship was therefore observed between experiences of camera theft and support for AI-driven camera security systems.

From a sociological point of view, the findings align with Routine Activity Theory of Cohen & Felson (1979), emphasizing the role of capable guardianship in crime prevention, with AI tracking acting as a digital guardian. In addition, the study supports Rational Choice Theory of Coleman (1990) and Homan (1961), showing users are willing to invest in AI security when benefits outweigh costs. Moreover, the demand for AI security systems also reflects the Social Construction of Technology perspective of Pinch & Bijker (1984), as these innovations respond to users' real-world security concerns. Overall, AI-driven camera security represents both technological progress and socially constructed solutions to reduce theft, enhance safety, and support crime prevention in this digital age.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, the following suggestions are made:

1. Digital camera makers should integrate AI technologies such as tracking, geolocation, biometric verification, and remote monitoring into their products. These features would act as protective measures that help prevent theft and improve the chances of retrieving stolen devices.
2. Organizations related to professional photography, media, and education should host ongoing workshops and training sessions to raise awareness about AI-driven security tools. Enhancing users' knowledge and digital skills will promote wider acceptance and effective use of these intelligent security solutions.
3. Collaboration between law enforcement, camera manufacturers, software creators, and photography groups is essential to develop systems for reporting, monitoring, and recovering stolen cameras. Such cooperative efforts will bolster community crime prevention and support technology-assisted policing.
4. Considering that economic struggles and increased crime rates were seen as key factors behind camera theft, policymakers should prioritize efforts to decrease unemployment, poverty, and social inequality. Research in social sciences consistently indicates that improving these foundational issues can lower property crimes.
5. While AI-based surveillance can significantly enhance security, safeguards must be put in place to prevent abuse of personal data and tracking information. Laws and regulations should guarantee that these technologies respect ethical standards and legal privacy rights.
6. Photography-related organizations and employers should include digital security protocols in workplace safety policies. Insurance companies could partner with tech developers to promote AI security adoption by offering premium discounts for covered equipment.
7. Online photography communities, professional bodies, and networks should create platforms for exchanging information about stolen gear, suspicious behavior, and recovery initiatives. This collective action can reinforce informal social controls alongside technological protections.
8. Future research should explore a broader social impact of AI driven system for security and theft recovery. Comparative studies across different professions would also add valuable insights to the study of technology and crime prevention.

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