

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Melissa Sones

Melissa Sones Consulting

917-806-4072mobile

Melissa@melissasonesconsulting.com

**NEW AMERICA’S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS
SALES TO GO UP 2.7% TO 4%
BIG NEWS: MORE AFFLUENT BUYERS REPORT ATTENDING MORE COCKTAIL
PARTIES THIS YEAR – KEY PREDICTOR OF INCREASED JEWELRY AND
CLOTHING SALES
BLACK FRIDAY SALES TO HIT ALL-TIME HIGH
HOT TOY? THE XBOX ONE
GIFT CARDS TO EXPLODE
BUYING ANY GIFT ONLINE UP FROM 39.4% to 47.7%**

Please see end of release for all specific stats

CHARLESTON, SC - November 13, 2014 – According to the America's Research Group Christmas Shopping Forecast released today, sales this holiday season will go up 2.7% to 4%. 23% are planning a few large purchases this year, which is double last year. The prediction for Black Friday is for a huge surge in sales to an all-time high.

“More consumers are positive this year,” said Britt Beemer, Chairman and CEO of America’s Research Group. “It reflects a change in attitude from 2013. The big winners among the retailers will be Walmart, Amazon, TJMaxx/Marshall’s and the Dollar Stores. Sears and JC Penney will be challenged.

“Additional news from our survey is that there will be big growth among more affluent shoppers. They report going to more cocktail parties, which is a major predictor of increased jewelry and clothing sales. The question is, will this happen?

“Additional holiday news is that consumers told us that they will purchase gift cards in numbers we consider to be explosive.

“And this year also shows consumers highlighting a big-time toy that will be very hot – the XBOX One, versus the last six year when there was no stand-out toy.

“While mall sales are down and teen stores are in jeopardy, sales at freestanding stores will be up.

“Overall we consider this to be a more positive year than last year with more consumers reporting feeling better off. The only cloud over the season is fear of credit card debt resulting in collections.”

Britt Beemer is available Friday November 14 all day for interviews. Media on deadline, please call Britt Beemer directly at 843-345-0939

The ARG research consisted of 1000 telephone interviews November 6-8, 2014 at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%. The next ARG shopping survey will be conducted November 13-16, 2014. The surveys will continue every week through the shopping season.

America's Research Group, one of the nation's foremost consumer research and strategic marketing firms, marks its 35th anniversary in 2014. CEO Britt Beemer is a key resource and advisor to leading brands and top retailers. He is author of *The Customer Rules*, published by McGraw-Hill. Britt Beemer is a winner of the American Business Award for Executive of the Year - Business Services and Company of the Year - Business Services.

Results/Highlights include:

Consumers expect to spend more - 30.0% up from 24.7% for \$751-1,000 and \$1,000-\$2,500 up as well 24.5% compared to 17.0%

Slightly more spending less all year and expect to spend less this Christmas 31.1% versus 27.8% last year

More feel better off 59.3% versus 56.4% in 2013 and 53.1% in 2012

23% planning a few large purchases, double last year

Black Friday Results

Big, big numbers over Thursday/Friday up to 55.6% an all-time high compared to 43.3%

Those expecting big/better Black Friday deals up 43.4% last year to 48.7% this year

69.6% very likely shop early bird specials on Friday morning, a little less than last year 76.7%

Those shopping Thursday evening 35.2% versus 50.4% shopping early Friday am

Opening at 6:00 p.m. Thursday is preferred by 28.4% - a big jump in interest in shopping the night before - compared to only 19.2% last year with an 8:00 p.m. opening

Big surge the weekend before Christmas 27.2% this year versus 21.4% last year

Big growth in consumers going to upscale Christmas parties and will need to buy dress or jewelry up from 17.4% to 24.6%

Item Results

The new hot toy is XBOX One at 21.7%

Gift cards up to 68.6% compared to 59.0% last year

More video games this year 45.4% versus 40.0% last year

Toys the big, big winner this year 31.3% versus 28.2%

Online Highlights

Buying any gift online up from 39.4% to 47.7%

Of those with online access, 55.0% expect to buy online up from 38.0% the previous year

Those shopping online, only 4% plan to spend over \$750 compared to 17.0% the previous year

Retailer Results

Those expecting to shop at Walmart more versus 2013 -39.9% said more only 14.9% said less

TJMaxx/Marshall's/HomeGoods 27.2% more 12.3% less

Dollar Tree 22.6% more 8.9% less

Amazon 24.0% more 10.1% less

Those shopping JCPenney/Sears more dropping from 27.2% last year to 15.8% this year

Major/upscale department stores also down with 9.8% more this year compared to 15.5% last year

Big number expects to shop more at off-price stores up from 34.3% to 46.1%

Mall-based retailers could suffer more with going to enclosed less at 33.2% this year up from 26.7%

Teen retailers will take the biggest hit in malls 15.0% last year but down to 11.4% this year

Those going to free-standing stores more - -47.9% up from 40.4% last year

Those shopping at luxury stores in the past but not this year up from 5.3% to 10.2% but that could change based upon their advertising offers