

**For Immediate Release**

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**AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP HOLIDAY FORECAST #2 REVEALS  
CONSUMERS SHOPPING WALMART LESS  
TARGET AND J.C. PENNEY IN SERIOUS TROUBLE  
ROSS, T.J. MAXX, MARSHALLS SHOW SIGNIFICANT DECLINES  
AMAZON ONLY WINNER  
BLACK FRIDAY/THURSDAY EVENING: CONSUMERS FAR MORE OPTIMISTIC  
CONSUMER CONFIDENCE SKYROCKETS FROM A YEAR AGO  
JUMP IN NUMBERS REPORTING WILL SHOP THURSDAY EVENING**

According to the second America's Research Group Holiday/Christmas Forecast of the season, as first reported in last week's survey, consumers said they expected to shop Walmart less, the first drop in retail history. That is now reflected in their October shopping levels: Walmart had 1.7% fewer shoppers than at 79.3% this year versus 81.0% last year.

Big retailers continue to struggle. According to this survey, Target is in serious trouble with 48.9% of consumers shopping there last October and only 38.9% this October, a 10 point decline from a year ago. Sears is experiencing a serious decline in shoppers - going from 30.7% last October to 17.3% this October, a 13.4 point drop in share. And J.C. Penney is also in trouble with a 23 point drop - going from 35.0% of consumers shopping there last year to 22.0% this year.

The off-price retailers, Ross, T.J. Maxx and Marshalls, also experienced a significant drop - going from 34.7% of consumers last October to 26.1% this year which is an 8.6 point drop.

Amazon is the only winner - going from 28.9% of consumers last year to 32.8%, a 3.9 point increase.

For Black Friday/Thursday evening, more consumers report trying to save 40%-50% off, up 2 points from 32.4% last year to 34.4% this year. The good news is that consumers are spending more because they are more optimistic, rising from 11.4% to 16.6% which represents a 50% increase from a year ago.

Consumer confidence has skyrocketed from a year ago - going from 62.9% to 71.5%, a 9.4 point increase and a 20-year high. Feeding the newfound confidence is that 34.9% believe their employer will be increasing their payroll in the next 2-3 months, rising 4.9 points from 30.0% a

year ago. Consumers also report feeling that they are truly better off as a family than they were a year ago - at 66.6% compared to 60.0% a year ago, an increase of 6.6 points, another 20-year high.

As for Black Friday, which includes Thursday evening, more consumers say they will shop on Thursday evening and 53.7% will be looking at all the inserts on Thanksgiving Day to decide who has the best sales.

More consumers will scan prices with their phone this season, up from 26.4% to 29.3%.

Consumers also report they will continue to look at the ads to buy what is on sale at 46.0%, up from 44.7% a year ago. As consumers make more money 18.3% are now buying their favorite brands again, up 50% from 11.7% a year ago.

However, only 26.9% of consumers believe in advertising that reads, “buy early bird specials now” - down from 30.8% a year ago, almost a 4 point drop.

17.9% of Americans expect to buy a TV in the next three months, with Walmart being their #1 place to go at 43.4%. Only 10.4% of Americans expect to buy a computer in the next three months, with Best Buy being their #1 preferred choice at 38.6%. 11.0% plan to use a Christmas layaway program with Walmart the clear leader at 73.9% share.

According to Britt Beemer, ARG Chairman, “Our Christmas forecast survey, which came out last week, suggested a strong increase in sales of 5.0% for those stores giving consumers great deals. Those numbers are consistent with this study which shows more consumers wanting to get items on sale and higher-end consumers moving back to their original ‘better brand’ position.”

Mr. Beemer continues, “A final note: Walmart needs to be very careful because shopping levels are down slightly and consumers are seeing themselves shopping at Walmart less during the Christmas season.”

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***For media on deadline or for background, please call Britt Beemer directly at 843-345-0939***

The ARG research consisted of 800 telephone interviews with consumers conducted November 16-21, 2017 at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%.

America’s Research Group, one of the nation’s foremost consumer research and strategic marketing firms. 2017 is ARG’s 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 29<sup>th</sup> year of Christmas Surveys. 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.

