

For Immediate Release

Contact:
Melissa Sones
Melissa Sones Consulting
917-806-4072 mobile
Melissa@melissasonesconsulting.com

**AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP HOLIDAY FORECAST #4 REVEALS
OPTIMISM FROM "TRUMP EFFECT" CONTINUES
SHOPPING OVER WEEKEND UP TO 45.6%, BEST IN SIX YEARS
MORE SAY WILL EXCEED BUDGET AT 23% VERSUS 15.7% LAST YEAR
THOSE SPENDING MORE AT 40.7% UP FROM 32.5% LAST YEAR
WALMART BIG BRICK AND MORTAR WINNER AT 30.8%
GREATEST PERCENTAGE EVER WILL OPT FOR GIFT CARDS AT 62.7%
MOST IN AFFORDABLE \$21-\$25 RANGE AT 21.7%, WAY UP FROM LAST YEAR
CHILDREN'S APPAREL CONTINUES AS SURPRISE HOT ITEM - ALL-TIME HIGH**

CHARLESTON, SC - According to America's Research Group's fourth holiday survey of the 2016 season, consumer optimism is continuing due to the "Trump effect" while at the same time consumers express caution due to their personal financial situations. The latter is reflected in the 62.7% of Americans saying they will opt for gift cards, an all-time high, notably in the less expensive price ranges of \$21 to \$25, up to 27.8% from 17.8% in 2015, and in the \$16 to \$20 range, up to 10% from half that last year; and of the low use of credit cards at only 33.3%.

Overall, though, the newfound optimism post-election is continuing to be reported with shopping this past weekend up to 45.6%, the best since 2010; and with far more consumers saying they will shop throughout the season this year at 70% (versus waiting for the weekend before Christmas when deals are often best.) More consumers will exceed their budgets at 23% this year versus 15.7% last year. Those spending more is at 40.7%, up from 32.5% last year. And those buying gifts for more people is up from 23.3% last year to 32.3% this year.

The "Trump effect" is continuing to support an 8 point increase overall for the season versus last year with 2016 sales predicted to be at a 3.5% to 4% increase. Without the post-election optimism, albeit cautious, sales would have been predicted at minus 2% for the season.

Enclosed shopping malls – the "loser" for many seasons – rebounded from 19.9% last year to 29.5% this year, in part because department stores offered better deals to consumers who told us on Black Friday at nearly 78% of all Americans or 150 million-plus that they will shop if the best possible deals are offered. The surprise hit of the season is children's apparel, which, as reported last week, beat toys and electronics for the first time ever, a result of far better deals offered by stores in these enclosed malls. Parents buying more apparel for their children is at 37.7%, an all-

time high. And apparel sales are up overall from 39.6% last year to 42.2% this year, also the result of better deals offered by retailers.

Walmart drew consumers to their brick and mortar stores in the biggest numbers over the weekend at 30.8% followed by Sears at 13.7%; JC Penney at 13.7%; Target at 12.1% and Toys “R” Us at 11.5%. Target’s 12.1% is a big drop from last year’s 26%. Those shopping Target for Christmas gifts is at 50.2%; and Walmart is 70.5%.

Video games are at the same levels as last year at 27.6% with Walmart’s brick and mortar stores still number-one in video game sales although these sales have dropped considerably from a 63.3% share last year to 42.1% this year; and Game Stop is at 20.8% up from 5.8%.

Online shopping is up slightly at 27.7% versus 25.3% last year but Cyber Monday was up big this year with 35.8% buying versus 27.8% last year. And of those who shopped Cyber Monday, 58.9% spent more and only 11.8% spent less. Amazon was the big winner online at 48.7% down from last year at 51.1%. Walmart online is also down at 8% versus 12% last year.

“The real story here is still the ‘Trump effect.’ As noted, we’re predicting sales for the season at a 3.5% to 4% increase from last year. Without this effect, as reported by consumers, we would have predicted sales for the season at minus 2%,” emphasized ARG Chairman, Britt Beemer.

America’s Research Group has accurately predicted holiday season sales in 28 of the last 30 years within a half of one percent.

###

For media on deadline, please call Britt Beemer directly at 843-345-0939

The ARG research consisted of 800 telephone interviews December 2 – 4, 2016 with adults at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%. The next ARG shopping survey will be conducted on December 9-11, 2016. 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, marked its 36th anniversary in 2015 and its 25th of doing these 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.