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[Britt Beemer Predicts Retail Sales to Rise 3.1% this Christmas; Shoppers still Seek Deep Discounts While Spending More](#)

Charleston, SC, November 13, 2006... Shoppers are cautiously getting into the Christmas spirit this year with more saying they will entertain at home, spend more on decorations but look for deep discounts, according to the first 2006 Christmas survey conducted by America's Research Group (ARG). Based on the findings, C. Britt Beemer, founder and CEO of ARG, said that sales should increase at a 3.1% level this year. "Retailers that give shoppers strong price incentives and decorate for the Christmas holiday should do well this year," Beemer said. He pinpointed ten important trends for Christmas 2006:

1. Over half of consumers (21.0% very much and 32.0% some) are bothered when stores avoid using "Merry Christmas" in their stores and in their signage.
2. More consumers are entertaining in their homes this Christmas with 28.1% saying "more" compared to 24.8% saying "more" last year. Also, consumer spending on Christmas decorations in the price range of \$101-\$250 has gone from 6.5% to 18.3% this year.
3. Nearly as many shoppers believe 60% off sales are genuine (73.0%) compared to the 77.9% who believe 50% off is a genuine sale.
4. Retailers promoting big ticket items during their early-bird specials should be packed this year, because 65.1% of consumers say they will buy at early-bird specials compared to 46.8% last year.
5. The number of shoppers avoiding stores where they are short-handed has jumped up to 64.0% this year compared to 50.6% last year.
6. An all time high for service gifts with 12.4% giving them this year compared to the 9.4% previous high last year.
7. Consumers will be much more influenced by retailer advertising with 36.2% stating this heightened awareness this year compared to 32.0% last year.
8. Shoppers will be going to enclosed malls "less" this year at a 25.9% level—the highest "less" level since Christmas 2001 when 30.6% said "less" after the September 11th attack.
9. More shoppers (70.4%) will try to avoid the weekend crowds by shopping more during the week and during the weekday if at all possible. This 70.4% is the highest level over the last 10 years with Christmas, 2003 the previous high at 68.4%.
10. The biggest jump in price range of Christmas gifts is in the \$36-\$50 range going from 30.8% last year to 35.5% and the biggest drop is in the \$21-\$25 price range going from 18.6% last year to 12.5% this Christmas season.

ARG surveyors interviewed 1,000 adults between Wednesday and Friday, November 8-10, 2006. Based on the results, ARG projects Christmas retail sales to increase from 2.6% to 3.4% on a comp store basis. The study has an error factor of + or - 3.8%. ARG will conduct four more Christmas retail surveys beginning after Black Friday, the Friday after Thanksgiving.

America's Research Group is the consumer behavior marketing firm that provides clients the

insight, strategy and tactics to increase market share. America's Research Group's expertise in consumer behavior has made it a key resource and advisor to leading brands and top retailers in the nation for 27 years.

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