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How Retailers Drive Christmas Shoppers Away: Decorate Stores Less and Don't Say "Merry Christmas"

Charleston, SC, December 6, 2006... More and more shoppers buying Christmas gifts this holiday season are expressing their displeasure at the meager decorations they are seeing in the stores, according to surveys being conducted by America's Research Group (ARG), which track Christmas retail sales. Two in five consumers (40.8%) feel stores are less decorated this Christmas compared to years past. Last year at this time, only 23.8% felt stores were decorated less, double the number of complaining consumers in 2004 (11.6%).

"Consumers cite three principal lacks in store decoration: no Santa Claus or Christmas signage, no decorations/very few decorations in or on the windows, and no real distinctiveness about the store – looks like any other store," says C. Britt Beemer, founder and CEO of ARG.

Over one fifth of consumers (21.6%) acknowledged they shopped at stores with few decorations. When asked to describe in what way they were not decorated, 25.4% said "no decorations at the front entrance," 22.0% said "no decorations/very few decorations in or on the windows," 16.2% said, "did not say Merry Christmas," 15.6% said "there was no change in the store except for an aisle or two" and 12.1% said "there was no Santa Claus or Christmas signage" in the stores they shopped.

The number of shoppers who did not shop at a particular store due to few or no Christmas decorations has doubled from 4.1% in 2005 to 7.9% this year.

"When you are looking at a Christmas season where comp store sales growth will be 3% or less and that 8% of consumers are not shopping your store due to a poor decorations, retail executives need to take notice," Beemer says. "Based upon these trends, retailers need to re-prioritize their store displays during the Christmas shopping season or more shoppers will walk out next year," he predicts. Beemer blames the trend on "Wall-Street-driven" executives at retailers who place short-term earnings above long-term market success.

ARG surveyors have interviewed some 3,000 adults in three Christmas retail surveys, beginning in mid November. Two more surveys in the series will be conducted this year. Comp sales are annual sales for stores in business at least one year.

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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