



As Brand Keys Predicted, Black Friday has Become a Season Unto Itself

Brand Keys 2014 Holiday Shopping Survey Finds Sales to Grow Four Percent

NEW YORK, NY (November 3, 2014) – “Super-charged by increased mobile outreach, consumer planning, and increased numbers of retailer mobile apps, traditional retailers will be going to work earlier, and working harder to engage consumers this season,” noted Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, Inc. www.brandkeys.com, the New York City-based brand loyalty and customer engagement research consultancy.

These facts-of-retail-life were identified by 16,000 consumers in Brand Keys' 20th annual national holiday shopping survey. “Retailers will need to work longer and harder if they want their share of a projected individual \$855.00 for the 2014 holiday spend, about 4% higher than last year,” said Passikoff.

And many consumers missed Black Friday because it started last Saturday. “Surprised?” asked Passikoff. “Well, it shouldn't have been a total surprise.” Store checks conducted by Brand Keys found retailer displays of holiday greeting cards, giftwrap and Christmas-themed gifts already on display in October. Consumers shopping for Halloween candy, actually had to sort through themed packaging,

“because retailers had Christmas candy leitmotifs right next to the bat-wing and witches-on-broomsticks packaged candy,” said Passikoff.

More than Half to Start Holiday Shopping in November

In the 2014 Brand Keys Holiday Shopping survey, 54% of consumers indicated they were going to start Holiday shopping in November, “a trend we’ve commented upon for a number of years,” added Passikoff. Only 25% of consumers – 10% fewer than in 2013 – indicated they were going to wait until Black Friday November 28” said Passikoff.

Amazon and Walmart kicked off their Christmas discounts on Saturday, November 1st – 27 days before the traditional Black Friday, which had long been regarded as the start of the holiday shopping season. Amazon started its “Black Friday” Saturday with two daily deals on holiday merchandise that will run through December 22nd.

Walmart’s chief merchandising officer Duncan MacNaughton, said, “As soon as they put away their Halloween costumes, our customers start prepping for Thanksgiving buying Christmas trees and shopping for gifts.”

Virtually all consumers interviewed indicated they will buy holiday gifts online again this year (98%). And, even in light of the mobile movement, bricks-and-mortar retailers still rank high on consumers’ list of places they intend to shop:

Store Type	<u>2014</u>	<u>% change from 2013</u>
Discount Department Stores	96%	+2
Traditional Department Stores	78%	+2
Specialty & Apparel Stores	40%	- 5

Catalogues (25%), are down again from last year by 50%, “but apparently if a consumer can pull it up on a site on a mobile device, they feel that hard-copy has become superfluous,” noted Passikoff.

Gift Cards for All

Gift cards have become as universal as greetings cards, with nearly everyone indicating they’ll buy at least one this year (95%).

All other categories remain relatively unchanged from 2013. “Apps and downloads have replaced CDs, DVDs, and printed books,” said Passikoff.

Consumers indicated the following categories where money was going to be spent:

Clothing and Accessories	78%
Electronics/Phones/Computer	51%
Personal Care Products/Spa	33%
Jewelry	20%
Food and Wine	20%
Home Décor	7%

“Value is paramount for all platforms and consumer expectations regarding outreach and convenience, particularly for mobile, and the shopping experience for bricks-and-mortar retail, are all up again,” said Passikoff. “Retailers that can integrate the store experience with their mobile outreach, will likely find it to be a winning combination,” said Passikoff. “Just much earlier this year.”

Given the intense competition for consumer dollars, Department stores and specialty shops will have to become more aggressive on deals, promotions, and operating hours. "They won't be able to avoid it this year," said Passikoff.

Brand Keys (www.brandkeys.com) is the only research consultancy that specializes in customer loyalty and consumer emotional engagement metrics that accurately predict future consumer behavior. These measures enable companies and brands to anticipate shifts in what has become a more digitally driven and rapidly changing marketplace.

Contact: VISIBILITY

Len Stein

cel 914 527 3708

Lens@VisibilityPR.com