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**PRESS RELEASE
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**Brand Keys 2018 Holiday Shopping Survey:
Consumers Will Spend 5% More This Year, 50%+ Before Black Friday**

NEW YORK, NY November 5, 2018 – “High consumer confidence and low unemployment have combined to produce a 5% increase in anticipated holiday spend,” said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, Inc. www.brandkeys.com, the New York City-based brand loyalty and consumer engagement research consultancy. According to 11,625 shoppers who participated in this year’s survey that is an average spend of \$985 per household.

What Gifts Are Consumers Planning To Buy?

“Gift cards have become as universal as greeting cards,” said Passikoff, “Nearly everyone (96%) indicated they’ll buy at least one this year.” Consumers indicated they plan to buy gifts in the following categories. Changes from last year appear in parentheses:

Clothing and Accessories	83%	(- 2%)
Personal Care Products/Spa	60%	(+5%)
Electronics/Phones/Computer	52%	(+4%)
Kitchen/Cookware/Appliances	46%	(+1%)
Toys	31%	(+1%)
Jewelry	30%	(+5%)
Food & Beverages	25%	(- 1%)
Home Décor	15%	(+5%)
Books	15%	(+5%)
Tools	12%	(+2%)
Sporting Goods	11%	(+1%)

Which Retailers Will Profit Most?

Virtually all consumers interviewed (98%) are buying online again this year. “Online has become the default venue for browsing, promotions, price checks, and, ultimately, buying holiday gifts,” noted Passikoff. Consumers intend to use 3+ multiple shopping venues again this year.

<u>Store Type</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>% change from 2017</u>
Discount Department Stores	90%	- 5
Traditional Department Stores	80%	+ 7
Specialty & Apparel Stores	70%	- 3

Electronics	30%	+ 5
Price Clubs	22%	- 2
Sporting Goods Stores	19%	+ 1
Outlet Stores	15%	----

Catalogues (6%), are down again another 2%. “If a consumer can get the same content on a computer, tablet, or smartphone, platforms likely to be more interactive, they regard hard-copy as subordinate to digital and essentially superfluous,” Passikoff remarked.

Consumers Opt for “Black November” Shopping

“Earlier shopping has become the ‘new normal’ for the holidays,” noted Passikoff. “More than half the respondents (55%) indicated they’ve already shopped or intend to shop *before* the traditional Black Friday.” Retailers have acknowledged these shifts in the consumer-shopping paradigm, and are acting on them with earlier and earlier ‘Black Friday-like’ sales. “We call it, ‘Black November.’”

Before September	5% (+1%)
September	10% (+3%)
October	15% (- 1%)
November (Pre-Black Friday)	25% (+3%)
Black Friday	20% (- 5%)
December	25% (+5%)

“Black Friday still represents a retail raison d’être, and even a ‘tradition’ in some families, but it is fast becoming a relic of 20th century retailing,” noted Passikoff.

Besides Gifts, What Are Consumers Looking For?

Just as in holiday seasons past, value is paramount. Consumer expectations for outreach and convenience are up again. “Retailers that can provide a sense of consumer comfort, confidence and shopping ease will see better bottom lines. Free shipping and returns, order online-pickup-in-store or ship-to-store options will have holiday shoppers’ attentions again this year,” Passikoff said.

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 consumer-driven, rapidly changing marketplace. Survey was run from 10/20-10/31/18.

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