

US consumer confidence declines

November Index drops more than 8 points

The US Consumer Confidence Index dropped further in November after declining in October. The index now stands at 90.4 (1985=100), down from 99.1 in October. The Present Situation Index decreased from 114.6 last month to 108.1 in November, while the Expectations Index declined to 78.6 from 88.7 in October. The decline was mainly due to a less favourable view of the job market. Consumers' appraisal of current business conditions, on the other hand, was mixed. Fewer consumers said conditions had improved, while the proportion saying conditions had deteriorated also declined. Heading into 2016, consumers are cautious about the labor market and expect little change in business conditions.

Consumers' assessment of current conditions was less positive in November. Those saying business conditions are "good" decreased from 26.8% to 24.4%. But those claiming business conditions are "bad" also decreased from 18.3% to 16.9%. Consumers were less upbeat about the current state of the job market. Those stating jobs are "plentiful" decreased from 22.7% to 19.9%, while those claiming jobs are "hard to get" increased to 26.2% from 24.6%.

Consumers' optimism about the short-term outlook declined sharply in November. The percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months decreased from 18.1% to 14.8%, while those expecting business conditions to worsen increased slightly to 11.0% from 10.4%.

Consumers' outlook for the labor market was also more pessimistic. Those anticipating more jobs in the months ahead fell from 14.4% to 11.6%, while those anticipating fewer jobs increased from 16.6% to 18.7%. The proportion of consumers expecting their incomes to increase declined from 18.1% to 17.2%, while the proportion expecting a decline increased from 10.5% to 11.8%. ■ *Source: Home Accents Today*



Seeing the spots

Leopard prints leap back into home decor

Going by the October High Point market, one can say that leopard prints have leaped back into the spotlight in home furnishings. It was mostly upholstery that sported the exotic animal pattern, but lamps, rugs and occasional pieces also found their wild side. The look of leopard is timeless whether it's a pillbox hat or a pouf, but we no longer have to harm the big cats to get their pattern. Unless you are a naturalist, it's hard to tell cheetah and jaguar prints from leopard, but all of them were stalking this market.

Leopard spots in textiles can be traced back to the 17th century says a designer pointing to the frame of her Ansonia/U chair with a black-and-white colored cheetah/ leopard fabric on the legs. The look was inspired by a jumpsuit she saw at the Milan fashion show. "I like it when animal prints get a modern interpretation, and I think there's always a place to mix these compelling patterns into home decor," she said. One of the most remarked about pieces was a low back Charmer chair upholstered in a tattooed leather leopard print. The interior designer who reinvented Baker Furniture's Milling Road Collection, says a leopard print is always in style. It adds an effortless chic to any space. It is also considered a neutral because it mixes with so many colours, patterns and styles. It is timeless.

"Animal patterns, be they print or woven, never go out of style, and designers are always exploring new ways to utilize them in fashion and interiors," said another designer. "One of the current trends is to explode the scale of the pattern, which creates a more contemporary vibe when the fabric is applied to a chair or bench or even wall art," she said.



A chair in large black and white animal spots, can be paired nicely with the sleek shiny steel frame. Arms of chairs can be covered in these prints. A strong statement can be made with dark walnut-framed sofas fully upholstered in a leopard print fabric. ■ *Source: Home & Garden*

Patio and balcony most preferred among outdoor spaces



The patio is the most habited outdoor spaces. Six out of 10 consumers who live in a house have a patio and four out of 10 of consumers living in a condominium have one. Among apartment dweller, a balcony is the most common outdoor space for at 47%, followed by a patio at 31%.

Casual Living and New York-based Apartment Therapy fielded an online consumer survey asking readers about the outdoor spaces in and around their home, garnered responses from more than 550 consumers. Nine out of 10 consumers use their outdoor space to relax and 76% read. Grilling, cooking, barbecuing and entertaining are popular among 71%. Not surprisingly, a majority of consumers, nine out of 10, use their outdoor space during the summer months of June, July and August; 85% during the spring and 81% use it during the fall. Even during the coldest months of the year in winter, more than one-quarter use their outdoor space. ■

Source: *Casual Living*



Mobile shoppers put retailers on notice

According to the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) around 25 per cent of online transactions this Christmas are expected to be made on a mobile device (tablets and smartphones). Executive director, Russell Zimmerman, says retailers need to make sure these payments are secure. The number of people doing their Christmas shopping from a mobile or tablet is expected to be the largest ever, and the ARA encourages retailers to ensure they have all the requirements in place to enable shoppers a happy experience, from security measures to back of house IT systems.



Consumers aged 18 to 34 (Gen Y) who own a smartphone and/or tablet are leading the retail digital revolution, with 75 per cent of Australians saying they will shop somewhere else if a mobile site or app is slow, crashes or is just not up to scratch, according to a consumer survey on mobile shopping in five countries. Gen Y is mobile, social and has higher expectations when it comes to their digital customer experience, putting more pressure on retailers.

"Mobile shopping will shatter records again this year, and the price retailers will pay for poor digital experiences will also be historic," says Dave Anderson, APAC marketing director for digital performance software company, Dynatrace, which commissioned the research. "We can see the future of retail by looking at what mobile shoppers ages 18 to 34 are doing now. They are demanding flawless customer experiences and are quick to be disappointed and complain on social media. "This trend led by Millennials has changed retail forever. Today, companies will win or fail based on their ability to deliver great customer experiences at every digital opportunity along the shopping journey."

Indeed, 54 per cent of 18-34 year olds in Australia will do more Christmas shopping on their smart phones and tablets than they will by making in-store purchases. Also, while in store, 61 per cent will use their smart phones and tablets to compare prices, read product reviews and download coupons. The price of poor digital performance can be substantial for retailers, according to the survey, with 49 per cent of Gen Y saying they would shop elsewhere if a mobile site or app fails to load in three seconds or less, and 59 per cent says they will share their poor online shopping experience on social media. Mobile apps have also become a big part of omnichannel strategies, so it is important for retailers to adapt and integrate this into their businesses? 65 per cent of Australians aged 18-34 say that company-specific mobile applications have better user experience and performance than a company website.

The digital revolution is affecting all industries, but is impacting highly competitive market segments like retail at an accelerated pace. Customer behaviours and expectations are changing more quickly than most businesses can adapt, putting them at risk. However, with digital performance management, development, IT ops and business teams can get needed analytics and technical context to better collaborate and focus on delivering user experiences that maximise success. ■ Source: *Australian gift guide*

Serenity & Rose Quartz

Pantone colour of the year for 2016

Pantone, an X-Rite company and the global authority on color and provider of professional color standards for the design industries, announced PANTONE 15-3919 Serenity and PANTONE 13-1520 Rose Quartz, as the PANTONE® Color of the Year selection for 2016; a harmonious pairing of inviting shades that embody a mindset of tranquility and inner peace.

As consumers seek mindfulness and well-being as an antidote to the stress of modern day lives, welcoming colors that psychologically fulfill the yearning for reassurance and security are becoming more prominent. Weightless and airy, like the expanse of the blue sky above us, Serenity comforts with a calming effect, bringing feelings of respite and relaxation even in turbulent times. Rose Quartz is a persuasive yet gentle tone that conveys compassion and a sense of composure. "With the whole greater than its individual parts, joined together Serenity and Rose Quartz demonstrate an inherent balance between a warmer embracing rose tone and the cooler tranquil blue, reflecting connection and wellness as well as a soothing sense of order and peace," said Leatrice Eiseman, Executive Director of the Pantone Color Institute.

The prevalent combination of Serenity and Rose Quartz also challenges some more traditional perceptions around color association. "In many parts of the world we are experiencing a gender blur as it relates to fashion, which has in turn impacted color trends throughout all other areas of design," said Eiseman. "This more unilateral approach to color is coinciding with societal movements toward gender equality and fluidity, the consumers' increased comfort with using color as a form of expression which includes a generation that has less concern about being typecast or judged, and an open exchange of digital information that has opened our eyes to different approaches to color usage."

In apparel, with playful escapism as a theme for many, the pairing of shades can be expressed through patterning, plaids, floral prints, striping and color blocking. Variations of this hue will be seen in a variety of textures that make it wearable throughout the year, from warming and comforting plush wools and faux furs to more ethereal feeling, lightweight linens and cottons. Serenity and Rose Quartz are also a popular choice for Jewellery and fashion accessories, including handbags, hats, footwear and wearable technology. This engaging combination also works easily with other mid-tones, including cooler greens and purples. Pair with Lime Popsicle and Silver for some splash and sparkle, Old Rose for some tender nostalgia, or the velvety Fondue Fudge, which makes for a rich background.

Whether on their own or combined with other shades, the pairing of Serenity and Rose Quartz bring a feeling of calm and relaxation into the home environment. Like a serene sunset, Rose Quartz encourages reflection on one's surroundings while Serenity, a transcendent blue, provides a naturally connected sense of space. An ideal choice for rugs and upholstery, Serenity and Rose Quartz also work well in paint and for decorative accessories. Coupling solid and patterned fabrics, throws, pillows and bedding in these shades provides a comforting respite and feeling of well-being in the home. Incorporating texture enhances the duality and kinship of these hues. Serenity and Rose Quartz colored kitchen items and tableware, as well as home accessories like candles, decorative bowls, vases and florals, add subtle color accents while contributing to a welcoming and peaceful space. Translucent, glazing, matte and metallic shine are key finishes. ■ *Source: Pantone*

Business Opportunity

Buyer from Japan interested in table mats and table cloths

Aki International
Carp Saginuma, Arima 7-5-1-204
Miyamae-ku
Kawasaki, 206-003, Japan
Contact: Akira Oye
Sales Representative
Tel: 81-044-852-5840
Fax: 81-044-852-5875
Mobile: 81-090-9230-2877
E-mail:
ayoye1213@silver.plala.or.jp
aoye1213@silver.plala.or.jp

Cisco Brothers acquires Environment

High-end case goods and upholstery producer Cisco Brothers announced the acquisition of eco-friendly furniture brand Environment. Environment will keep its name and continue to be a Los Angeles-based company. Officials said it will continue to produce environmentally friendly pieces of the utmost quality craftsmanship, under the umbrella of Cisco Brothers. The companies share an eco-friendly, handmade ethos. For more than 20 years, Cisco has been using sustainable materials and building methods to create furniture. ■ *Source: Furniture Today*

Global toy sales rise 7 %

Russia, Mexico, and Poland Surpass the Established Markets, with Double-Digit Growth

Around the world, toys are an essential part of the holiday season, for consumers, retailers, and manufacturers alike. While the season presents a time of eagerness and excitement for gift givers and receivers, it is also a crucial time for the toy industry, accounting for, on average, about half of the industry's annual sales. With that, it is an encouraging sign when sales are on the plus side heading into the fourth quarter of the year, as they are in 2015, according to global information company The NPD Group. Toy industry sales are up 7 percent overall (January-September 2015), across the 11 global markets tracked by NPD

Sales in smaller countries including Mexico and Poland are growing faster than sales in the more developed countries, with Russia showing the fastest growth amongst those NPD tracks globally. Even with the country's high inflation, Russian

consumers are spending more on toys and also buying more of them, with a 7 percent increase in unit sales during the first nine months of the year. The largest super-category in Russia is Building Sets, which has been growing 50 percent faster than the rest of the toy market. Russia's toy category performance is different compared to the rest of the world in two distinct ways: Outdoor & Sports market share is less than half of what it represents in the other 10 countries, and Vehicles market share is 90 percent bigger in Russia than in the other nations.

Despite the international embargo, high inflation, and diminishing disposable income, Russians purchased and received more toys in the first nine months of the year than they did in the same period in 2014. This signals good growth for the market once the economy recovers. ■ *Source: NPD*

Strengthening exporters' confidence with brand rate mechanism

Copy of F. No. 609/105/2015-DBK, Dated 24th November, 2015

Central Excise formations processing brand rate applications are requested to suggest measures or steps that can further strengthen exporters' confidence with the brand rate mechanism and make it easier to work with. The suggestions should be within the principles that guide drawback based on actual duty and have the traits of reliability, simplicity and workability without compromising revenue.

2. For this, initiative should be taken by the Commissioners to approach the brand rate applicants for consultation and the points which, according to your examination, can be considered for implementation may be forwarded with reasons as what situation they shall ameliorate and the specific changes that would be required. Your own points may be included. Following two points that have been flagged to the Ministry may also be included in your reports -
 - (a) Seeking yearly audited accounts for inventory verification thereby delaying the fixation of brand rate till yearly audit is complete
 - (b) Difficulty faced in providing bill of entry for determining the basic customs duty portion where the imported duty paid inputs are procured by exporter from 'independent' registered dealer or importer
3. This reference may be dealt on priority and reports in the format below may please reach the Commissioner of

Zone name	Exporter manufacturer Name	Brand rate Product involved	Point made	Justification or reasons why change is required	Manner and details of resolving and implementation
(1)	(II)	(III)	(IV)	(V)	(VI)

Central Excise, Pune-I by 15.12.2015 who is designated to compile and provide them to the Ministry in soft format by 21.12.2015, followed by hard copies with appropriate enclosures.