

An Advertiser's Guide:

REACHING BACK TO SCHOOL SHOPPERS



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INTRODUCTION



As we approach the 2020 school year, parents, students and teachers alike are wondering if, how, and when schools will reopen. And, when the answers to these questions are changing weekly, it becomes difficult to plan for the upcoming school year. Parents are now asking themselves, “should I buy supplies for in-person learning? Remote learning? Both? What safety and hygiene items will my student need?”

With so much uncertainty, back to school shopping is looking very different. Where parents are shopping, what they are buying, and when they are making purchases is unlike any year in the past.

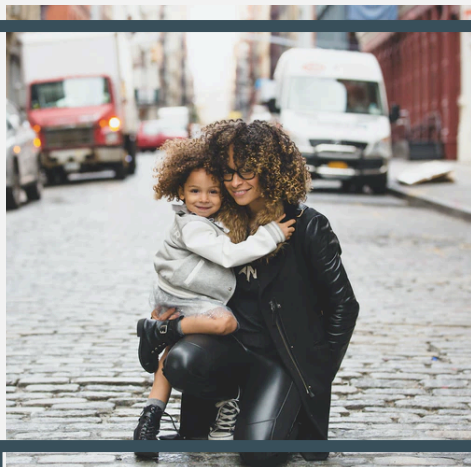
Advertisers can’t solve for all back to school concerns; but, they can solve for changing consumer needs by staying in-tune with consumers as they journey through this unique back to school season. By offering and promoting things like discounts, curbside pick-up, and school supply bundles, advertisers can help mitigate some of the challenges shoppers are facing.

However, with frequent changes in consumer behavior, it may be challenging to understand and reach this audience. At Digilant, we understand the importance of back to school shopping for advertisers and its impact on annual sales, so we’ve outlined key considerations for this back to school season: who’s shopping, where they’re shopping, and what they’re buying. We’ve also included key digital advertising tactics you should incorporate to make the best of this unique back to school shopping season.

KEY INSIGHT

Have your content focus on **bridging the gap between the classroom and online learning at home**. Consider answering questions such as, “What does a child need to be successful?”

WHO'S SHOPPING FOR BACK TO SCHOOL?



PARENTS

\$519

average amount spent per student

The historical back to school shopping timeline of July - early August is expected to extend into the fall as school systems are still deciding on or revising reopening plans.



COLLEGE STUDENTS

\$685

average amount spent per student

41%
shop three weeks to one month before school starts.

23%
shop two weeks before the semester.



TEACHERS

\$459

average amount spent on classroom supplies

This group shops a little earlier in the back to the school cycle. But, prepare for the second wave of "teacher shoppers" at the beginning of September as they take advantage of sales.

KEY INSIGHT

Parents report that **price** is by far the most important factor that influenced their decision to buy school supplies.

Source: Numerator

Will Shoppers Spend Less this Year?

Yes and no. It's expected that consumers will spend less on traditional back to school items like clothing and classroom supplies this year when compared to 2019. However, looking more closely at "all in" spending, consumers are expected to spend the same amount of money – or more – just on different items than in past years.

Traditional back to school shopping categories:

\$492 (-5% YoY)

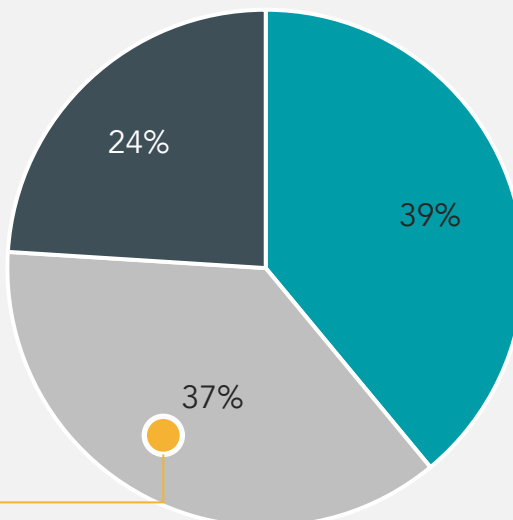
Emerging Back to School Categories:

\$529 (+2% YoY)

KEY INSIGHT: Emerging Categories

- Computers and hardware spend is projected to be up **38%**.
- Electronic gadgets and digital subscriptions are projected to be up **4%**.

Source: Numerator



Expected spending to prepare for school year compared to last year

- Will Likely Spend Less
- Will Likely Send Same
- Will Likely Spend More

ADD TO CART. MORE PARENTS & STUDENTS WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ONLINE SHOPPING



Nearly **70%** of college students and parents say that they have been shopping online more due to COVID-19, so it will come as no surprise that online shopping will play an imperative role in back to school this year. It's important to note, however, that online shopping behavior for school supplies differs from most online shopping behavior - it often starts with casual browsing. Parents and students are high intent shoppers, with a list in-hand a most likely a budget. With this in mind, it's important for advertisers to make back to school shopping as quick and seamless as possible for consumers. On the next page, you'll find a few tips outlining how to execute on this.

KEY INSIGHT

- **40%** of back to school shoppers will do most of their back-to-school shopping online and have items shipped to their home.
- **25%** of shoppers will choose to buy online and pick-up in store.

Source: The Washington Post

ADD TO CART. MORE PARENTS & STUDENTS WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ONLINE SHOPPING *(continued)*



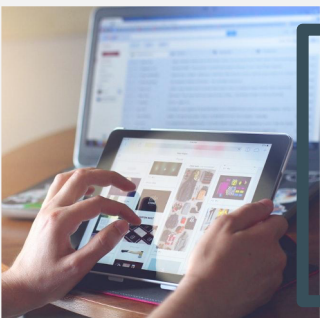
Parents ultimately make the purchase, but children are the key drivers in purchase decisions for back to school products. Companies and brands that can transition their eye-catching, kid-friendly in-store displays to the online experience will be positioned to drive more online sales.



Offer free shipping or discounts when possible. Many parents are on a budget for back to school shopping and looking to pinch pennies wherever possible.



Bundle similar products together such as pencils, pens, notebooks, and binders. This will make it easier for parents to breeze through long back to school shopping lists.



Prompt shoppers to purchase recommended products using a product recommendation feature at checkout, in retargeting ads, or in dynamic ad creative.

KEY INSIGHT

Percent-based discounts (i.e. 30% off) work best for products under \$100, while **dollar-based discounts** (i.e. \$30 off) work best for products over \$100.

Source: *springbot*

KEY TACTICS FOR CONSIDERATION.



This year poses unique changes for back to school shopping, so it's more important than ever to implement an omnichannel digital marketing plan. Parents won't be packing kids in the car on a Saturday afternoon to make their annual back to school shopping trip to Target. Rather, they'll be researching and buying back to school items in installments - buying what they know they'll absolutely need now and waiting until final school plans have been made to make final purchases. With an omnichannel strategy, advertisers will be able to connect the dots between consumer purchases both online and in-store. Check out five key tactics to incorporate into your omnichannel plan to make the most of this back to school season.

Geo Targeting

School re-opening plans vary city-to-city and state-to-state. Using geo and zip code data, advertisers can target consumers with different offers and messages to stay top of mind as parents and students make back to school purchases.

Amazon Audience Targeting

Amazon is a prime destination for back to school shopping. Whether advertisers want to advertise on Amazon or across other publishers, leveraging Amazon's audience insights and data will help advertisers reach high-intent, in-market back to school shoppers.

Paid Social

Students have tremendous input when it comes to the products their parents purchase for back to school. And where do students spend time? Social media. It's estimated that US teens spend at least 7 hours of their day on their phone, consuming media. Finding unique ways to showcase your back to school products on social will drive awareness and purchase intent among students and their parents.

Dynamic Creative Optimization (DCO)

As reopening plans continue to evolve, having the ability to update messaging and swap creative with DCO is essential.

OTT/CTV

76% of homes in the US have at least one connected device. As CTV numbers reach an all-time high throughout the Coronavirus outbreak, it is especially important to leverage this platform for your back to school campaigns. Advertisers can re-target consumers who were served CTV ads with display ads to stay top of mind throughout this unique back to school buying cycle.

Tracking consumers across every touchpoint of the sales cycle is more important than ever. Choosing a strategic digital advertising partner to help track, analyze, and optimize your campaigns toward in-market consumers will push your back to school strategy forward.

LET'S TALK!

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DIGILANT

Digilant is an omni-channel digital partner built to take advertisers from now to next. We do this with omni-channel digital advertising strategies that are data-driven, actionable, and effective. Part of ispDigital, Digilant is made up of 100+ data-driven media minds and advertising technologists spread across US offices in Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Atlanta. By combining big ideas with executional scale we are well-equipped to champion consumer insights, campaign analysis, and media initiatives that propel brands and agencies forward. Visit us at digilant.com to learn more.