



Brand Keys

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2019 Back-to-School Spending Up Only 2%

Anticipated Family B2S Spend Estimated at \$745

**“Black Friday” Wannabes and Prime Days
Accelerate Buying But Not Spend**

NEW YORK, NY (July 29, 2019) – The 2019 Brand Keys Back-to-School (B2S) survey for pre-school through 12th grade student households found parents plan to spend only slightly more this year but intend to spend it much earlier than in previous years.

Consumers indicated only a two percent B2S increase, an average spend of \$745 (versus \$730 in 2018) per family, according to the 25th annual survey conducted by Brand Keys, the New York-based brand loyalty and emotional engagement research consultancy (www.brandkeys.com).

Earlier B2S Promotions

“Starting back-to-school marketing earlier every year isn’t a surprise, but 2019 B2S buying has been ratcheted up by ‘Black Friday’ and ‘doorbuster-like’ promotions that started in June. Combine that with successfully contrived ‘shopping holidays,’ like Amazon’s Prime Days and B2S shopping patterns have shifted dramatically,” said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys. “We’ve tracked this paradigm for the past decade; more connected shoppers, seeking more values, get better offers from retailers and, thus, shop earlier.”

Back-to-School marketing starts earlier every year and 2019 was no exception. “Consumers appear to be shopping in waves: 60% have already shopped (June and July, + 21% YOY) and 40% are planning to wait until August, just before school starts “hoping for rock bottom clearance prices,” noted Passikoff.

Methodology

The survey included assessments from 7,962 households with school-age children, drawn from the nine U.S. Census regions, with interviews conducted over the period June 14th through July 21st, 2019.

No B2S Category Surprises!

“Average anticipated spending in all major back-to-school categories were virtually unchanged from a year ago,” noted Passikoff. “Increases over last year are accounted for by cost-of-living increases we’d normally expect to see.”

Clothing:	\$225.00
Shoes (athletic & dress)	\$124.00
Supplies	\$110.00

Computers/Electronics/
Tablets/Smartphones: \$225.00
Books/Study Aids \$ 50.00

Where Consumers Shop B2S Most

Today's consumers use all purchase platforms, with online and discount retail preferred. Virtually every consumer interviewed (99%) specified online sellers for back-to-school buying, their typical reasoning being, "That's where the best deals are going to be."

The biggest increases where consumers intend to shop appeared for Department Stores and Office Supply stores (+6% each). Other location preferences were as follows:

Online	99% (----)
Discount Stores:	99% (+ 1%)
Department Stores:	85% (+ 6%)
Specialty Retailers	60% (+ 3%)
Office Supply:	50% (+ 6%)
Drug Stores	19% (----)
Catalogs	4% (- 1%)

Who's Spending Most For B2S

B2S regional spend rankings were unchanged YOY, with the highest spend again indicated for consumers living in the Northeast, followed by West, Midwest, and Southern state B2S buyers.

Northeast:	\$835.80
West:	\$742.56
Midwest:	\$714.81
South:	\$686.83

Earlier Perceived Value Is Paramount

"We're re-entering a purchasing period where consumers are trading brand differentiation for pocketbook value," said Passikoff. "Consumers are not seeing the differentiation brand value ought to bring, and more-and-more are buying on a low-lower-lowest price strategy. That's going to be problematic for retailers and brands."

"A history lesson retailers should have learned is, unless you're a commodity, pricing is always a short-term strategy," noted Passikoff. "It may be effective for the moment, but it's ultimately an extraordinarily unsuccessful tactic for a brand's long-term survival."

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