

Back To School 2019: Mobile Shopping, Midsummer Sales and Big-Box Retailers Dominate This Year's Trends

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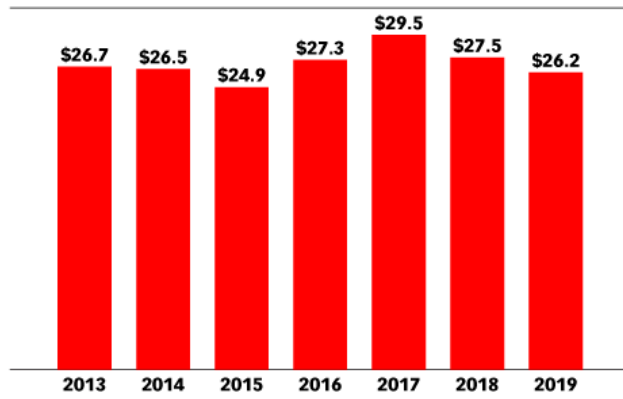
Blake Droesch

Amazon Prime Day serves as [the unofficial kickoff to the back-to-school shopping season](#), and spending on back-to-school items is expected to reach \$26.2 billion in 2019, according to the [National Retail Federation](#) (NRF).

Back-to-school spending will decrease by 4.7% compared with 2018, per the NRF. However, the drop could be explained by the particularly strong 2017 shopping season, where spending reached a seven-year peak of \$29.5 billion. The average mean spending between 2013 and 2019 was \$26.9 billion.

US Back-to-School Retail Spending, 2013-2019

billions



Note: ages 18+

Source: National Retail Federation (NRF), "Back-to-School/College Spending Survey" conducted by Prosper Insights & Analytics, July 15, 2019

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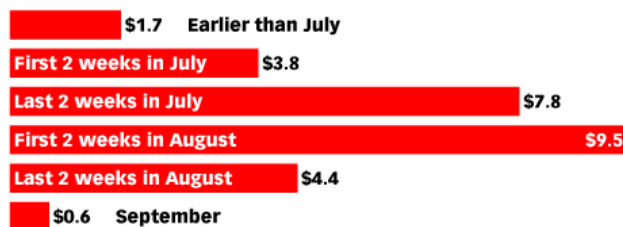
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Separate data from [Deloitte](#) showed that back-to-school spending would reach \$27.8 billion or \$519 per student this year, up slightly from its estimated \$510 per student in 2018.

While most students won't head back to school until the end of August, midsummer is the most popular time for US parents to begin shopping. The largest portion of back-to-school budgets (\$9.5 billion) will be spent during the first two weeks of August, per Deloitte. The last two weeks of July, coinciding with Prime Day sales, are also popular (\$7.8 billion). However, by Labor Day, most US parents will have spent the majority of their back-to-school budgets.

US Back-to-School Retail Spending According to US Parent Internet Users, by Timeframe, June 2019

billions



Note: n=1,200; total back-to-school spending estimate=\$27.8 billion

Source: Deloitte, "2019 Back-to-School Shopping: Getting ready for the first day of school," July 10, 2019

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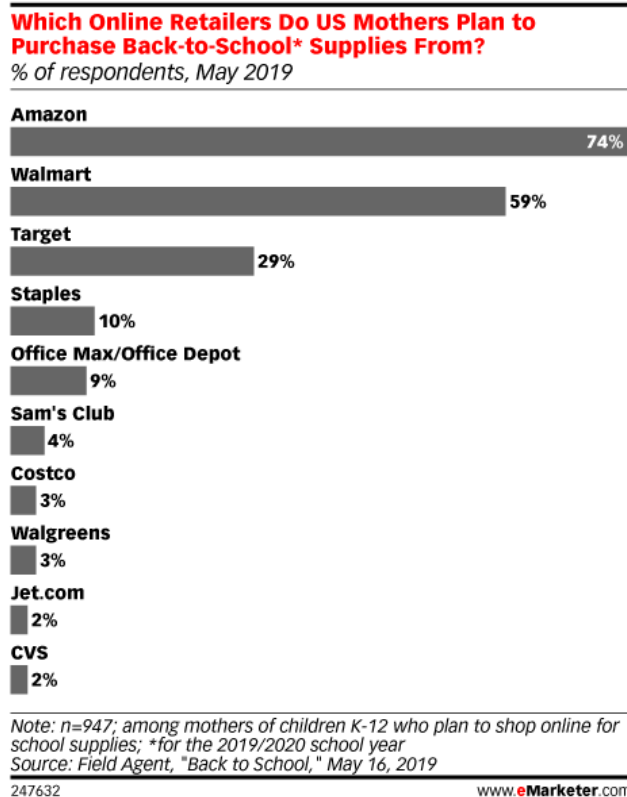
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Deloitte’s research also found that the most popular place for US parents to shop for back-to-school were mass merchant stores like Target and Walmart (88%), which will receive nearly twice as many shoppers as online-only sites (45%). Dollar stores (36%), specialty clothing stores (30%), off-price stores (27%), office supply/technology stores (22%) and traditional department stores (21%) will also receive a fair amount of shoppers.



As a whole, 56% of back-to-school budgets will be spent in store, down 1% from last year, per Deloitte. And nearly one-third (29%) of the average back-to-school budget will be spent online, up 6% from 2018.

Mobile is driving the rise in ecommerce purchases. Deloitte's survey indicated that more online shoppers will purchase back-to-school items on mobile (60%) than desktop (42%) this year. Nearly three-quarters of US mothers plan to shop on Amazon this year, vs. Walmart (59%) and Target (29%), according to a survey conducted by retail solutions firm [Field Agent](#).



While consumers have acclimated to shopping via smartphones, there are certain products that back-to-school shoppers still prefer to purchase in-store. Deloitte found that 62% of clothing and accessories shoppers will purchase in-store, while 23% of plan to shop online and 15% were undecided.

School supply shopping habits were identical to clothing and accessories, but consumers seem more willing to shop online in other categories. Half of electronic gadget shoppers will purchase online, per Deloitte, while 37% will go in-store and 13% are undecided. Shoppers for computer and hardware will have similar buying habits, with 45% going online, 41% shopping in-store and 14% undecided.

