

STRATEGY GUIDE

Back to School & Tax-Free Days

Ace Your Back-to-School Marketing Strategy

While the school season for many students in the U.S. begins in August or September, retailers begin gearing up for back-to-school in the early weeks of summer. GroundTruth observes real-world visitation patterns of back-to-school shoppers. We then use these insights, combined with our proprietary technology to provide smarter, more effective, and targeted media plans, so you can target the right consumers ahead of the curve.

In this guide, we'll:

- Dive into 2022 shopping trends and explore expected impact in 2023
- Highlight key opportunities, from timeframes to audiences, to maximize your marketing campaigns
- Provide recommendations on targeting tactics that can drive results, from awareness to conversion

2022 Back-to-School By the Numbers



8%

Despite increasing inflation and a negative economic outlook, parents still planned to spend an increase of 8% YoY on school supplies¹



\$34.4B

Expected back-to-school market size in 2022¹



49%

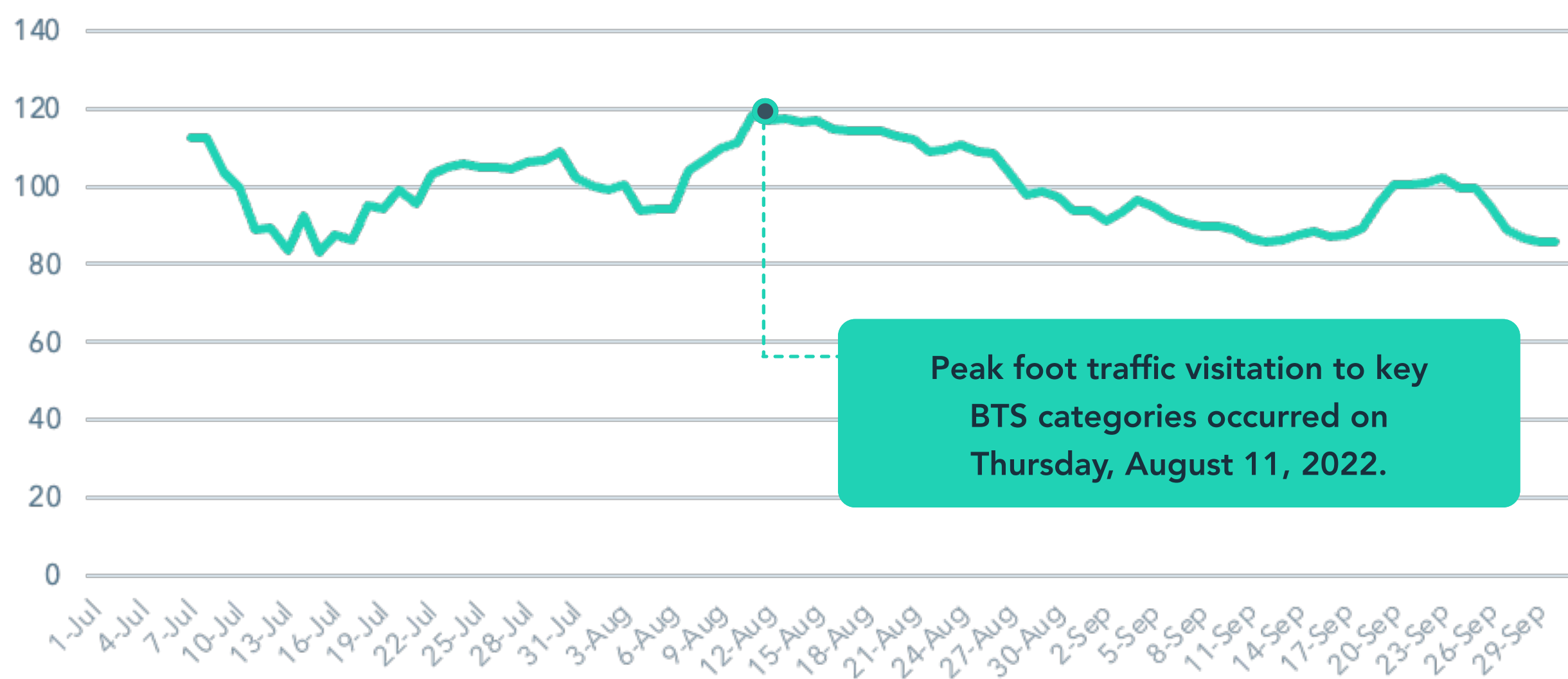
Percentage of parents relying on in-store shopping for their overall back-to-school budget¹

Trends

When do most parents begin back-to-school shopping? We analyzed foot traffic to multiple key categories within the retail sector, such as big box, furniture, and office stores, to track visitation timing and trends during the 2022 back-to-school season.

TOTAL RETAIL FOOT TRAFFIC

(Indexed, Rolling 7-day average)



Total retail foot traffic, indexed between a 3-month period between July and September, showed the biggest spikes in foot traffic the **second week of August**.

The second highest spike in retail foot traffic occurred earlier in the summer, in the week immediately following July 4th. Get ahead of the curve when it comes to your back-to-school campaign, and strategically target based on last year's foot traffic trends.





Tax-Free Days

Several back-to-school essentials, such as clothing, school supplies, and electronics, are included in tax-free days, making it the perfect time for shoppers to maximize their savings while they stock up.

Not all states have tax-free days and qualifying items vary by state, but we see an uptick in in-store visits in states with these tax breaks. The top 3 states with the largest peaks in foot traffic during their tax-free days in 2022 were Virginia, Ohio, and Iowa. Virginia saw a **33% increase** during their 3-day tax-free weekend.



GroundTruth Targeting Tip

Ahead of tax-free days, target zip codes or designated market areas (DMAs) within bordering states to increase awareness of the tax-free days among out-of-state residents who would benefit from these deals.

Reach these audiences, drive them to your locations, and measure the impact on in-store visits.

WHICH PARTICIPATING STATES SAW THE LARGEST PEAKS IN FOOT TRAFFIC DURING TAX-FREE DAYS IN 2022?

Virginia: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	33%
Ohio: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	33%
Iowa: 8/5/22 - 8/6/22	31%
Arkansas: 8/6/22 - 8/7/22	30%
Oklahoma: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	30%
Massachusetts: 8/13/22 - 8/14/22	29%
Missouri: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	29%
South Carolina: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	29%
Mississippi: 7/29/22 - 7/30/22	28%
New Mexico: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	28%
Texas: 8/5/22 - 8/7/22	28%
West Virginia: 8/5/22 - 8/8/22	24%
Illinois: 8/5/22 - 8/8/22	21%
Maryland: 8/14/22 - 8/20/22	14%
Tennessee: 7/29/22 - 7/31/22	11%
Connecticut: 8/21/22 - 8/27/22	4%
Florida: 7/25/22 - 8/7/22	3%

Source: GroundTruth Visitation Data. Compared to average for the timeframe of 7/1/22 through 9/30/22.



Who

GroundTruth's data shows that the typical Back-to-School Shopper is also likely to fall into a few of our other Behavioral Audience groups as well, based on various visitation trends.



GroundTruth Targeting Tip

Back-to-School shopper audiences are **110% more likely to be In-Market for Auto**. What does this mean?

There is a huge opportunity between retailers and auto brands to target the other's core audiences as the school year begins and college students begin looking for deals on cars, or families think about transportation for their students.

Snapshot of the Back-to-School Shopper



168%

more likely to be a
Morning QSR Goer



110%

more likely to be In
Market for Auto



80%

more likely to be a
Do-It-Yourselfer

Source: GroundTruth Visitation Data. Compared to average for the timeframe of 7/1/22 through 9/30/22.

Strategies Across Personas

Use GroundTruth solutions to customize campaigns according to Back-to-School audience personas.



College Student Looking to Furnish a Dorm Room

Target audience groups like DIYers or reach consumers seen frequenting brands like Ikea. Drive in-store retail, furniture, or even auto sales and incremental traffic.



Student Shopping for Back-to-School Footwear and Apparel

Reach Fast Fashion Shoppers or focus on consumers displaying foot traffic visitation trends to brands like Nike. GroundTruth's location-based targeting tactics allow you to geofence around a specific area and reach Retail Blocks or trade zones.



Parent Stocking Up on Meal Prep and Easy Lunches/Snacks

GroundTruth's behavioral audience groups include Millennial Parents and Suburban Moms. Layer these groups on top of brands like Gap Kids for a more focused campaign.



Where Shoppers Visited

GroundTruth’s data shows which brands and locations won during the 2022 Back-to-School season.

TOP VISITED BACK-TO-SCHOOL RETAILERS BY CATEGORY

Department Store	KOHL'S
Footwear	DSW DESIGNER SHOE WAREHOUSE®
Off-Price	ROSS DRESS FOR LESS®
Electronics	BEST BUY
Apparel & Accessories	
Furniture	ASHLEY

RETAILERS WITH THE HIGHEST % INCREASE IN FOOT TRAFFIC

Department Store	+10%	Lord & Taylor
Footwear	+8%	new balance
Off-Price	+5%	Marshalls
Electronics	+17%	Apple
Apparel & Accessories	+9%	AMERICAN EAGLE OUTFITTERS
Furniture	+14%	

Source: GroundTruth Visitation Data. Compared to average for the timeframe of 7/1/22 through 9/30/22.

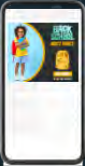
An Omnichannel Approach

Tactics to Use At Home on CTV and with Audience-Based Direct Mail



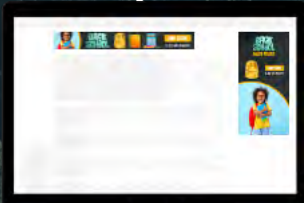
Behavioral Audiences

Connect with audiences based on a mix of intent signals across behavior and demographic attributes. (i.e. Department, Store Shoppers, Discount Shoppers, etc.)



Proximity Targeting

Define a geofence around a specific location to connect with audience nearby and drive them to your location.



Retail Block Targeting

Reach shoppers within a shopping center boundary.



Custom Audiences

Create tailored segments by layering visitation data, behavioral attributes, and 1st party data.



Neighborhoods

Use location targeting to identify residential areas frequented by your target audiences. Connect with consumers within a specific trade area or delivery zone of a particular store or location.

Tactics to Use Near a Specific Location on Desktop, Mobile, and Digital Out-of-Home



Real-world behavior. Real business results.

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Real Business Results

The proof is in the pudding. By using GroundTruth's media solutions, these retailers saw real business results and ROI from their campaigns.

A major office supplies retailer worked with GroundTruth during a 1.5-month time frame to target Back-to-School Shoppers.

Objective

Drive in-store sales and incremental traffic while creating brand awareness during the Back-to-School season.

Tactics Used

- Proximity Targeting
- Retail Block Targeting
- Neighborhoods
- Location Based Audiences
- Behavioral Audiences (Car Renters, Late Night Diners, Leisure Travelers, Electronic Enthusiasts, Coffee Lovers, Millennial Parents, Shoe Fanatics, Arts & Crafts Lovers, Big Box Shoppers, etc.)

Channel: Mobile



37K+

Total Visits



\$3.97

Cost Per Visit



Plato's Closet, a trendy, teen-clothing brand worked with GroundTruth for a one-month period during the Back-to-School season to drive major visits.

Objective

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Tactics Used

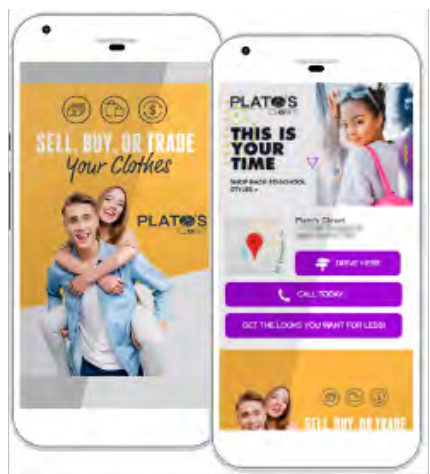
- Audience Targeting was used to reach consumers who had visited competitor locations in the past or had visited identified points of interest that would indicate a potential consumer
- Neighborhood Targeting reached consumers based on areas of high visitation affinity with Plato's Closet

Channel: Mobile



275+

Unique Visits



About GroundTruth

We're a media company that turns real-world behavior into marketing that delivers real business results.

Interested in Learning More?

Connect with your GroundTruth representative or reach out to hello@groundtruth.com



GroundTruth is accredited by the Media Ratings Council for our location, place, and visit datasets. Better performance begins with more accurate and trusted data.



¹ Deloitte



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