

IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL IN BC – AND BACK TO SHOPPING?

SHOPPERS STILL PLANNING TO SPEND – BUT DIFFERENTLY.



Ipsos Reid

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Vancouver, B.C. — With so many advertisements announcing back-to-school shopping, it is hard for consumers to ignore the fact that September is just around the corner and another school year is about to begin. As such, a new Ipsos Reid study in British Columbia was conducted to gain insights into shoppers' attitudes and behaviours when it comes to purchasing items for the 2009/2010 school year.

Survey results find that despite the current economic climate, many shoppers are not mindful of budgets when it comes to back-to-school shopping. In fact, four-in-ten shoppers claim they do not set a budget ahead of time, and instead just buy the items that they like/want (42%). Another 17% initially set a budget range they feel comfortable spending, but rarely stick to their budget. Four-in-ten do have a budget range and generally follow it (37%), with the remaining few being unsure (4%).

Further, reducing spending is not a priority for many. When asked to compare how much they have spent or expect to spend during this year's back-to-school shopping season compared to 2008, a quarter of back-to-school shoppers have spent or will be spending more in 2009 (27%), slightly more than four-in-ten spent or will be spending about the same amount (44%), while fewer than two-in-ten spent or will be spending less (16%). Still, the economy appears to be having some impact as a majority of those spending less tell us that the economy had an impact on their decision to do so (39% a lot of impact, 39% a little impact and 22% no impact).

The survey also reveals that the economic state is impacting specific back-to-school shopping behaviours. In particular, back-to-school shoppers agree that they have done or plan to do the following specifically because of current economic conditions:

- More actively look for sales on back-to-school items (84% with 57% strongly agree and 27% somewhat agree);

- More often reuse back-to-school items they already own (78% agree with 44% strongly agree and 34% somewhat agree);
- More often buy more store brand/generic back-to-school items (71% with 28% strongly agree and 43% somewhat agree);
- Use more coupons for back-to-school items (61% agree with 28% strongly agree and 33% somewhat agree);
- More often shop for back-to-school items at a thrift store (30% agree with 12% strongly agree and 18% somewhat agree); and,
- More often shop for back-to-school items at a consignment/second-hand store (29% agree with 9% strongly agree and 20% somewhat agree).

As such, it appears that although the downturn of the economy may not be drastically affecting overall back-to-school spending, it is playing a significant role in how consumers choose to shop.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid study fielded from July 28 to August 5, 2009. This online survey of 518 adult British Columbians who have done or plan to do back-to-school shopping for the 2009/2010 school year was conducted using Ipsos Reid's proprietary "Voice of the West Interactive Forum" – an online panel of more than 6,500 British Columbians who have been randomly recruited to match the overall characteristics of the adult residents of the province. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online studies of this nature, however, an unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 4.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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