

Press release

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Back to school: plenty of room for retailers to sell school supplies online

Hoofddorp, xxxx - The start of a new school year leaves parents and children facing a great dilemma: where to buy the most beautiful notebooks and the school diary that makes classmates gaze in awe? School items are not just a necessity, they are part of the identity of high school kids. Ingenico, global leader in payment, asked parents in the Netherlands and Belgium all about how they purchase school supplies. This resulted in some [interesting outcomes](#). For example: only a quarter of parents buy school supplies online. That means retailers have some opportunities to grab!

Although consumers are increasingly turning to online shops for the purchase of daily necessities, school stuff does not seem to have conquered the online domain yet. Only 24.3% of Dutch and Belgian parents turn to web shops when buying school materials. The difference between Dutch (29.3%) and Belgian (19.6%) parents is striking. Dutch parents who prefer to buy their stuff in store mainly opt for a department store (70.3%), while Belgian parents tend to turn to supermarkets (69%).

Online versus offline: convenience or family day out?

So why does online shopping stay behind when it comes to school supplies? The most important reason for this is the product itself: 44.2% of the parents prefer to see and touch the items before they make a purchase. Moreover, buying school supplies is not only a necessity, it is the kick-off for a new school year. For 23% of the parents, buying school stuff is part of a family fun day with the kids - an experience that no web shop can compete with. Moreover, according to many parents, in store shopping is faster (21.4%) and cheaper (18%) than online shopping.

How can online retailers attract the 'offline' parent to their webshop? Of the parents who did make online purchases, 71.3% did this out of convenience: 41.8% think it's nice that online stores are in business 24/7 and 29.5% think it's a great not to have to leave the house. Parents also look to web shops for a more diverse product offering (35.4%). Only 15% indicate that they buy almost everything online and therefore make no exception when shopping for school supplies.

Other highlights from the research:

- Both Dutch and Belgian parents can't be tempted by last-minute deals: 88% of parents have finished shopping well before September. The most popular month is August: during that month, 56% of parents buy school supplies.
- 4.8% of Belgian parents say that they feel uncomfortable when it comes to online payments. Among Dutch parents, this is only 1.2%.

- In the Netherlands, 67.9% prefer to pay online with iDeal, and only 7.1% with credit card. In Belgium, the credit card is much more popular: 23.7% of purchases are made with credit card, and 46.4% with Bancontact.
- Although mobile shopping is becoming increasingly important to many retailers, school supplies are mainly ordered on PC and laptop (70.9%). In Belgium, mobile shopping has become more common: 35.1% of purchases are completed on tablets or mobile phones, compared to 22.1% in the Netherlands.
- Schools tend to stimulate the online purchase of books: about 15% of the parents buying online materials did so because the school recommended them a certain website for the books.

Where many online retailers continue to gain market share at the expense of brick and mortar shops, that does not yet seem to be the case for school supplies. In addition, there are factors that are difficult for webshops to address (the purchase of school supplies as day trips), but when it comes to product variety, price and efficiency web shops can certainly get ahead.

Take aways for (web) shop owners:

- Combine online and offline. Shopkeepers who run both a brick and mortar store and a webshop must ensure that both channels connect to each other by looking at an omnichannel package that provides insight into online and offline purchases. This allows shopkeepers to follow trends and gain an improved insight into consumer behaviour on their various sales channels.
- Make life easy for online shoppers. No less than 21.4% of parents think that online shopping takes up more time than visiting a store, even though convenience is an often heard reason to choose for online shopping! Re-evaluate your customer journey: are the products easy to find? Is everything sorted in the right category and is a school diary directly recommended when buying a notepad? Is the checkout easy to find and how does the payment process work? When combining a fresh take on the customer journey with the right website analytics, vendors can optimize their website and payment process and thus stimulate sales.
- Stay in touch with the customer. Building a relationship with the customer is not always easy, but often a worthwhile investment. When customers buy their school supplies in store, make sure they are aware of the existence of the webshop. Should they have forgotten something, chances are they will order this online (family fun day is already in the pocket!). This also applies to online shoppers: keep them up to date with relevant offers (approach them next year with back-to-school offers when the summer vacation starts) and inform them about the shop near them.

About the research

This research was commissioned by Ingenico in collaboration with Yellow Communications and carried out by Kien Marktonderzoek. 1000 parents in the Netherlands and Belgium were interviewed for this study. www.ingenico.nl/en/backtoschool



About Ingenico Group

Ingenico Group (Euronext: FR0000125346 - ING) is the global leader in seamless payment, providing smart, trusted and secure solutions to empower commerce across all channels, in-store, online and mobile. With the world's largest payment acceptance network, we deliver secure payment solutions with a local, national and international scope. We are the trusted world-class partner for financial institutions and retailers, from small merchants to several of the world's best known global brands. Our solutions enable merchants to simplify payment and deliver their brand promise.

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