

INSIGHTS REPORT

Back-to-School & College 2025

Roundel™
Media designed by 



Gearing up for a new school year

School bells are ringing, and over 20 million Target guests—parents and college students alike—are shopping for all their back-to-school and back-to-college products.¹ Roundel has the first-party data and omnichannel expertise proven to help brands score higher ROAS all season long, and it begins with the learnings and takeaways found in this report.

WHAT YOU’LL LEARN

- Top priorities for Target guests
- How campaigns perform their highest
- Key timing moments, happening all summer
- Media recommendations to maximize impact



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Through this report, we’ll reference audiences in shorthand ways. Here’s a cheat sheet.

- BTS** → Back-to-school
- BTC** → Back-to-college
- BTSC** → Back-to-school & college

Price on the brain

When checking off their shopping lists, Target guests are on the lookout for brands and products that will help them make the most of their budget.



of BTC and 75% of BTS guests say **price is most important** when shopping for their school needs.¹



of BTC and 61% of BTS guests view **Target as their saving destination**, seeing supplies priced better than other retailers.¹

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Prioritize value messaging since promotions that emphasize savings are 1.5x more engaging and 1.4x more effective than creative with no offers or other key messages.²

Time promotions with key moments like Target Circle Week, as many price-conscious guests are also Target Circle™ Members.

Sustainability? Worth extra.



While price and value are most important for guests, they're willing to support eco-friendly causes with their wallets. Where relevant, craft stories around sustainability to boost promotions and engagement.

Social fuels discovery

From their feeds to their favorite creators, guests look to social media for BTSC inspiration—especially collegians seeking ideas for clothing and dorm essentials.

78%

of BTS guests plan to use social to **browse products** and **read reviews**.⁴

71%

of college-bound Gen Zers are **more likely to try a brand** or product after seeing a creator's post.⁵

59%

of Gen Z use **Youtube** as their top destination for search—spending an average of 51 minutes on it daily.⁵

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Inspire product discovery online with complementary store experiences.

In-store sampling
Influencers by Roundel™
Pinterest

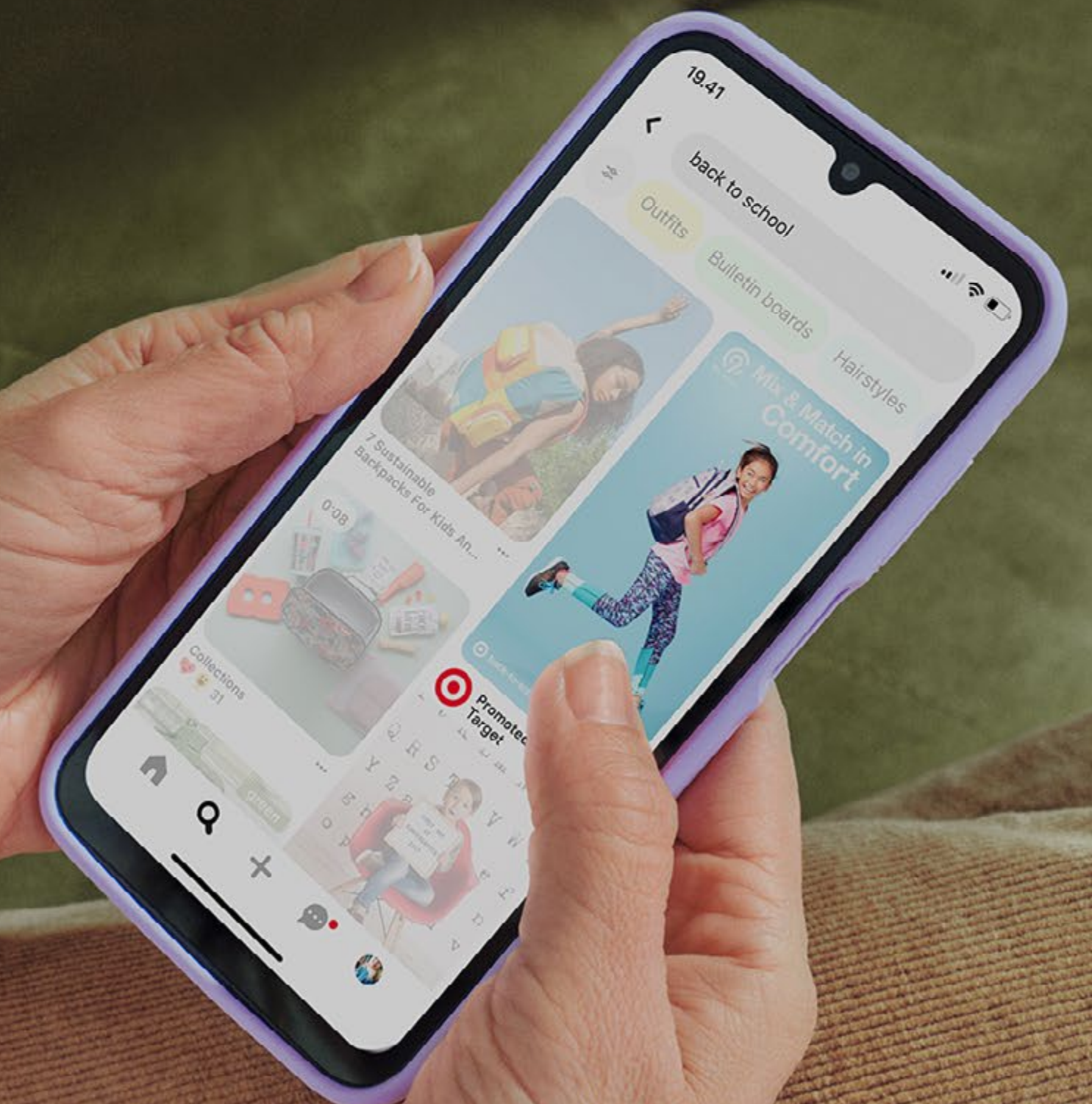
Tips for social storytelling

Amplify a mixture of self-expression messaging with price-conscious benefits.

Lean into seasonal trends of “hacks”—aka quick and easy solutions—for dorms, cleaning, meal prep, etc., as these are popular with BTC students and BTS parents.

Position Target as the back-to-school destination because guests associate it with joy, discovery, loyalty, affordability, and sampling.

Leverage creators to create authentic connection with guests, especially on YouTube with Gen Z.



Convenience scores high

Busy parents and students crave options that flex with their schedule, with the ease of online on the rise.

70% of parents prefer **shopping online** to save time and are influenced by personalized recommendations based on past purchases.⁴

25% of guests prioritize convenience with **flexible fulfillment options**.⁴

6% **YoY growth in digital fulfillment** (11% rely on in-store pick-up and 6% Shipt/ship to home).²

Content tip

Convenient meals, convenient shopping. Gen Z looks online for quick easy, meal solutions, with 68% choosing influencers as their source of inspiration.

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Tap into the digital places where curious guests seek accessible product offers.

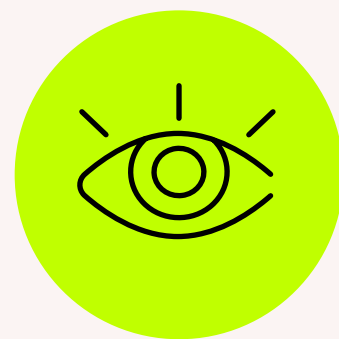
[Search Ads by Roundel™](#)

[Target Product Ads by Roundel™](#)



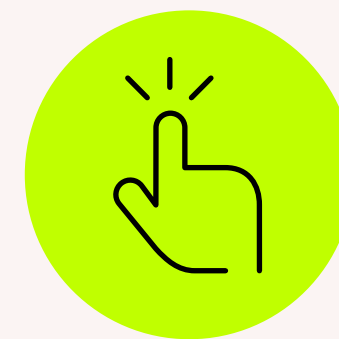
Smarter campaigns are in session

Leading up to a new school year, guests are seeking inspiration for all their class and dorm essentials. Roundel's insight-driven solutions put brands at the front of the class, grabbing the attention of more guests in all the places they love to browse.



5+ billion

impressions delivered by BTSC campaigns.¹



1.75%

CTR driven by search (Google, Pinterest Search and Target Product Ads).¹

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Omnichannel is everything. Know the importance of the full shopper journey—beginning with online inspiration and search through the final sales made by loyal guests in Target stores.

As shopping lists build, so do Target visits

BTSC guests view Target as their go-to school shopping destination. They're more likely to be Target Circle™ Members, and while they love the convenience of online shopping, they still make frequent in-store visits to score the best deals.

83%

of guests **shop in-store** for their BTSC needs.⁴

74%

of BTS guests and 72% of BTC guests are **hyper-loyal to Target**.⁴

Home

2024 BTSC CAMPAIGN RESULTS

\$17
ROAS²

42%
new guest rate²

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Engage with guests across the funnel by adding smart digital placements and promotions to your media mix.

[Pinterest](#)

[Search Ads by Roundel™](#)


[Target Product Ads by Roundel™](#)

BTSC SUPPLIES

Guests explore school supply offerings all season long, with their interest piquing in mid-summer.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

[notebook](#) [washable markers](#) [folder](#) [binder](#)


 Key demand begins in July, with peak shopping starting in August.

KITCHEN

As meal planning becomes top of mind, guests look to upgrade their kitchenwares.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

[cups](#) [tupperware](#) [plates](#) [microwave](#)

 Highest interest occurs during Target Circle™ Week and the start of classes.



Hardlines

2024 BTSC CAMPAIGN RESULTS

\$21

ROAS²

64%

new guest rate²

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Spark digital discoveries with an elevated BTC media spend during Target Circle™ Week.

[Pinterest](#)

[Search Ads](#) by Roundel™

[Target Product Ads](#) by Roundel™

ELECTRONICS

Tech shoppers are 60% more likely to be college students, looking to gear up their dorms and apartments with the latest gadgets, appliances, and more.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

headphones

laptop

tablet

earbuds

smart television

keyboard

mouse

battery

speaker

camera



Demand peaks during Target Circle™ Week, with the bulk of purchases increasing closer to move-in day.

SPORTING GOODS

Backpacks and lunch boxes are in high demand for BTS, driving growth for the category.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

water bottle

backpack

lunch box kids



Demand for the category begins in July with peak purchases in August.

College students seek trending move-in essentials as syllabus week approaches.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

water bottle

backpack

luggage



Interest peaks during Target Circle™ Week and into September, with 56% sales growth during the shopping season versus the 13-week prior average.



IGLOO®

Mastering the BTS climate

Igloo's first-ever Target BTS campaign succeeded with Roundel's data-backed solutions—driving greater conversion and new guest acquisition with those seeking lunchboxes and coolers.

SOLUTIONS

Display by Roundel™

Pinterest

Search Ads by Roundel™

2024 BTSC CAMPAIGN RESULTS

\$16 ROAS²

80% new guest rate²

Food & Beverage

2024 BTSC CAMPAIGN RESULTS

\$11

ROAS²

18%

new guest rate²

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Lean into easy, affordable meal prep and trends across channels—from online and in-app spaces to compelling in-store messages.

[In-Store Service Hubs](#) by Roundel™

[Influencers](#) by Roundel™

[Pinterest](#)

[Search Ads](#) by Roundel™

[Target Product Ads](#) by Roundel™

[YouTube Ads](#)

Nutrition is essential for BTSC, and guests make convenient lunches and snacks a priority.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

- 🔍 chips
- 🔍 snack
- 🔍 cereal
- 🔍 yogurt
- 🔍 breakfast
- 🔍 trail mix
- 🔍 granola

GOOGLE TRENDS IN AUGUST:⁶

- 🔍 easy school lunches ↑ 300%
- 🔍 weekly meal plans ↑ 4,000%



July 4–September: Guests stock up on snacks and lunch supplies as they return to school.



Essentials & Beauty

2024 BTSC CAMPAIGN RESULTS

\$11

ROAS²

29%

new guest rate²

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Partner with creators to lean into time-saving hacks including #CleanTok. Offer frequent online shoppers digital promotions and use in-store experiences to compel product discovery.

[In-Store Service Hubs](#) by Roundel™

[Influencers](#) by Roundel™

[Search Ads](#) by Roundel™

[Target Product Ads](#) by Roundel™

ESSENTIALS

Guests love a chance to try before they buy when it comes to personal care essentials.

32% are influenced by sampling in-store

↑ 48% YoY growth for sales

Parents and college students prioritize home essentials to stay organized and tidy.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

🔍 laundry 🔍 dishwasher pods 🔍 disinfectant wipes

GOOGLE TRENDS:⁶

🔍 eco-friendly products ↑ 350%

🔍 home cleaning hacks ↑ 190%

BEAUTY

BTSC guests are drawn to products that promote self-care, beauty, and wellness, especially trial sizes and new finds.

TOP SEARCH TERMS:

🔍 sunscreen 🔍 nail polish 🔍 deodorant
🔍 body wash 🔍 pimple patch

CATEGORY DIGITAL TRAFFIC TRENDS:

↑ 28% YoY growth in haircare

↑ 20% YoY growth in skin/bath care



Purchases ramp up during Target Circle™ Week and as the school year draws closer.

Apparel & Accessories

2024 BTSC CAMPAIGN RESULTS

\$11

ROAS²

46%

new guest rate²

HOW TO ACTIVATE

Boost your omnichannel presence with a strong digital and in-store media strategy.







[Pinterest](#)

[Search Ads](#) by Roundel™







[Target Product Ads](#) by Roundel™

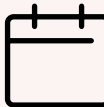
Fresh school outfits are top-of-mind for Target guests who use social media and search to find inspiration.

BTS TOP SEARCH TERMS:

-  dress
-  shoes
-  underwear
-  socks
-  shorts
-  tshirts

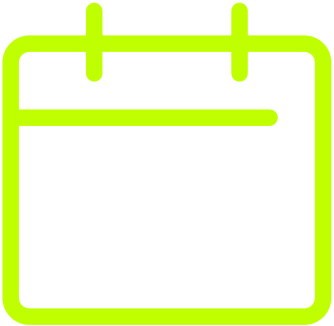
BTC TOP SEARCH TERMS:

-  dress
-  sandals
-  pajamas
-  jeans
-  tank top
-  hair clip

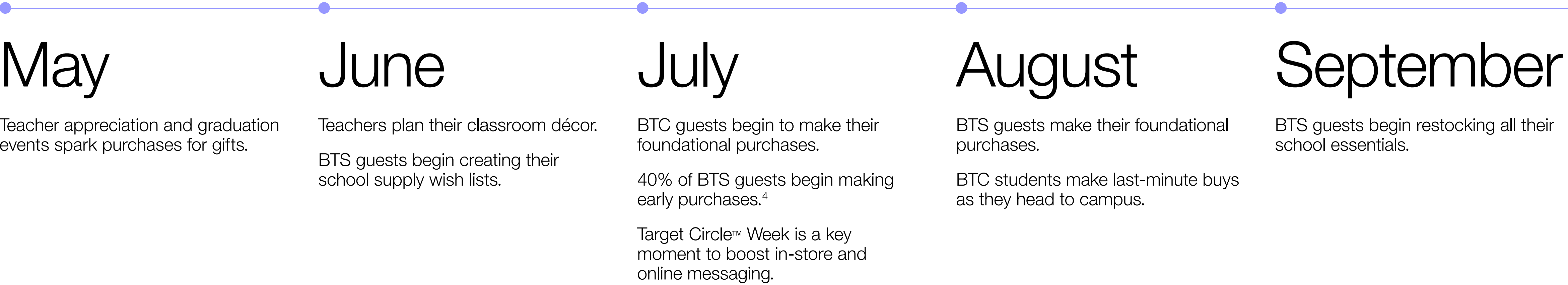


Shopping peaks during Target Circle™ Week, with parents buying last-minute outfits the week of August 4.





While new classes start around September, guests begin planning their purchases as the previous school year ends. Check out these key milestones in the purchase journey.

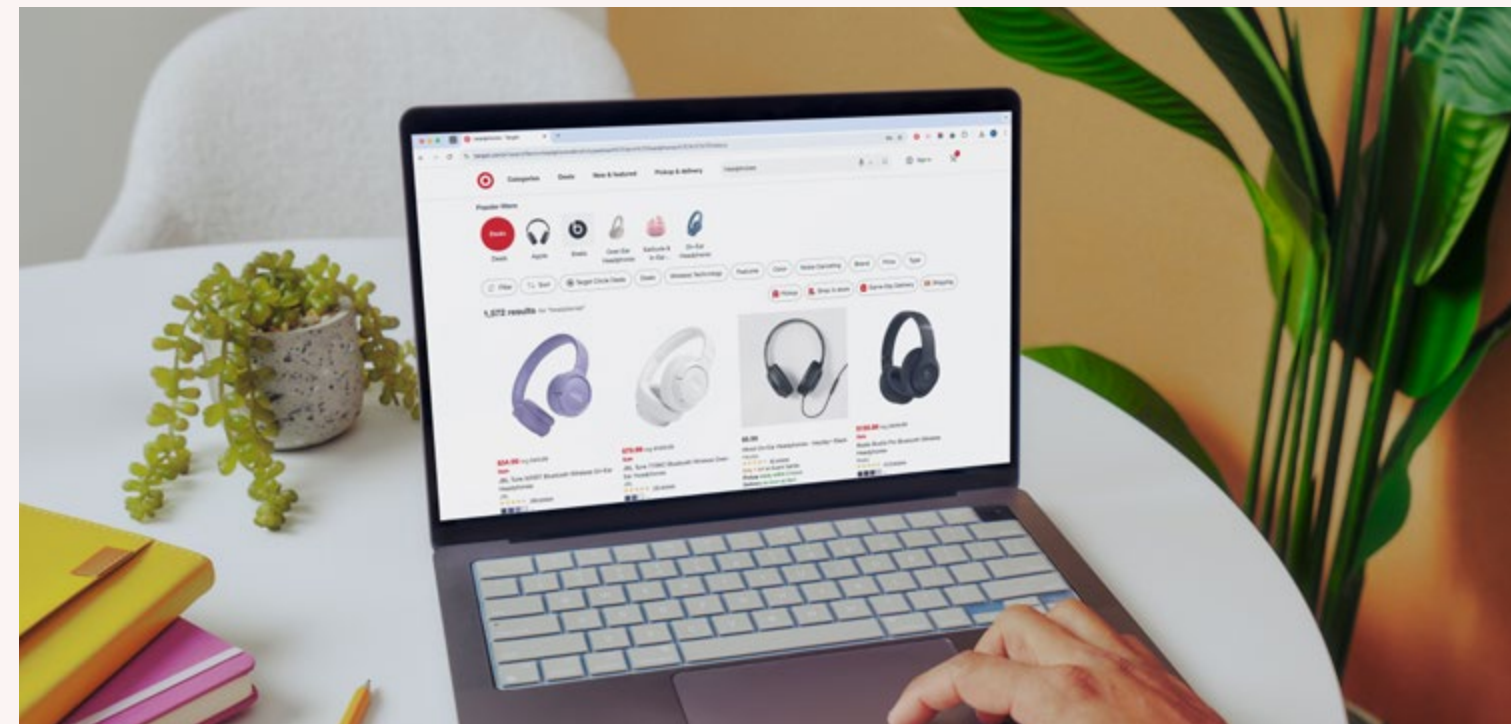


HOW TO ACTIVATE

Plan strategies that run ads across the summer season, with a focus on key moments like Target Circle™ Week and the month of August.

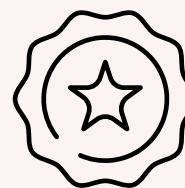
Key insights, major opportunities

Turn valuable knowledge into exceptional results.



INSIGHT

Guests seek brands that offer the best value.



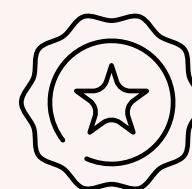
RECOMMENDATION

Build creative messaging around savings, price, and value to boost engagement and sales, especially considering Target guests make multiple store visits per week to score the best deals.



INSIGHT

Guests love finding inspiration online before making their final purchase in-store.



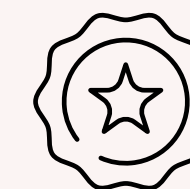
RECOMMENDATION

Take an omnichannel approach. Spark social discovery with influencers and Pinterest. Reach curious guests with Search Ads by Roundel™ and Target Product Ads by Roundel™. Complement it all with engaging in-store sampling experiences.



INSIGHT

While guests make BTSC purchases all season long, peak sales hit between July and August—making it easy to miss early- and late-season momentum.



RECOMMENDATION

Begin messaging early to reach guests first. Then, capture rising interest during Target Circle™ Week, keep momentum into campus move-in, and stay present for restocking in September.



Congratulations on completing
Back-to-School & College 101.
With all you've learned here, and through
Roundel's data-fueled solutions, you're
sure to stay ahead of the curve.

→ Explore all the solutions Roundel can offer your
campaigns at Roundel.com/Solutions.

Sources:

1. BTS BTC 2024 Insights Report
2. Target Internal Data, 2024
3. PwC June 2023 Global Consumer Insights Pulse Survey
4. BTS BTC Insights Guide — 2025 Sales Enablement
5. Google 2025 BTSC Insights
6. Google Search Trends