

Halloween Brings Pop Culture Knocking on the Front Door

✘ *By Marty Brochstein, SVP, Industry Relations and Information, International Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association ([LIMA](#))*

Halloween is like a deep dive into the pop culture mindset. All you have to do is open your front door to trick-or-treaters, or attend a Halloween party to see what's resonating with consumers today. Preschool characters, superheroes, videogame protagonists, movie and comic book villains, political figures, life-size candy bars and more will be ringing your bell or knocking on your door.

They've been driven to you by [Halloween](#) advertising and [marketing](#) that has been building steadily towards the costume and candy holiday for weeks now. My Facebook page has been filled with images of cute kids' and adults' costumes – see if you can catch the guy demo-ing his Ghostbusters' Sta-Puf Man costume in a hallway, or the kids in the [Star Wars](#) BB8 droid getups.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) predicts that total spending for Halloween will reach \$8.4 billion this year, up 11% from 2015, according to the organization's 2016 Halloween Consumer Top Costumes Survey. This represents the highest dollar figure in the 11-year history of the survey. According to the latest data, on average, consumers will spend \$82.93 on their Halloween-related shopping, an astounding 12% increase from last year's \$74.34.

Of course, that covers more than just costumes, on which they'll spend an average of \$31.03 – including those for their dogs and cats. Party decorations, candy, greeting cards and the like also take their pieces of that pie.

☒ Halloween-related sales have been rising steadily (with a couple of blips) for more than a decade as Halloween has grown into more of a family holiday, with full adult participation. Halloween is no longer just a candy-coated day for kids to beg candy from their neighbors through abject cuteness.

Adults have joined the fun, too, and used social media to help spread the word. Check out the many Snapchat and Facebook posts featuring scenes of grown-up parties and celebrants in either pre-made or ad hoc costumes. In an inherently visual medium, kids and grownups in costumes are often about as good as it gets.

So what's coming up the front walk, or arriving at the party this year?

As expected, some perennials continue to perform strongly among all ages. Star Wars characters from Darth Vader to Storm Troopers are, of course, a mainstay (and this year for the first time heroine Rey also will be making the rounds). Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, and assorted Marvel superheroes will be out in force as will the characters from Game of Thrones.

For kids, characters from Paw Patrol and Minions remain popular, and the recent explosion of interest in the Pokémon Go! game has been a tremendous boost to Pikachu and friends. The characters from Frozen also remain hot sellers.

For adults, zombies (whether generic or licensed from a TV show such as "Walking Dead", antiheroes (i.e. Deadpool, The Joker, Harley Quinn, and others), videogame characters from hits such as "Five Nights at Freddy's" or "Assassin's Creed," and political figures have been reliable performers.

On the political front, there seem to be relatively fewer Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton masks and costumes than one might expect in a presidential year. Certainly, many adults

will create their own Trump or Clinton looks – or maybe a mashup of the two. Trump in a pants suit, anyone?

While Halloween may be a day to gorge on the kind of candy that you'd shun during the rest of the year, especially candy corn – seriously, when else would you eat it? – think of it as an opportunity to see what people are watching, who they secretly may want to be and, if you're in the business, an opportunity to tap into a time when people just want to have some fun.

***About the Author:** Marty Brochstein is responsible for LIMA's outbound communications, as well as many of its educational efforts, such as the year-round webinar program and the extensive Licensing University seminar program that takes place each year in conjunction with the Brand Licensing Expo in Las Vegas. He also has spoken at conferences and seminars around the world on a wide range of licensing- and retail-related issues, and is widely quoted on issues related to licensing, marketing and branding. He joined LIMA in 2008 after 12 years as Executive Editor of The Licensing Letter, a New York-based newsletter that covers the global licensing business. He also was Editorial Director of the parent publishing company, EPM Communications. In addition to writing and editing the twice-monthly newsletter, he also compiled the publication's industry numbers and edited EPM's other licensing-related publications, including International Licensing: A Status Report, and The Licensing Letter's Sports Licensing Report. Brochstein was a business journalist for more than 30 years, primarily covering the consumer products and retail industries. Before joining The Licensing Letter, he spent five years as Senior Editor of Television Digest and founding editor of Consumer Multimedia Report. He also has been editor of several publications in the consumer electronics and retail fields. He is a graduate of Boston*

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