

Halloween forecast is frighteningly good

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So much for the weak economy. A record number of people, 161 million to be precise, are expected to celebrate Halloween this year, according to the National Retail Federations annual survey.

NRF has been conducting the consumer intentions and actions survey for 10 years and the outlook for this year is the brightest ever with average spending per person expected to increase to \$72.31 from \$66.28 last year.

“Eager to shake off the summer heat and forget about the economy for a few days, Americans are looking forward to having some fun this Halloween,” NRF president and CEO Matthew Shay said. “Many retailers have already stocked their shelves with Halloween merchandise and, given the popularity of the holiday this year, consumers should not hesitate when they find something that would make their celebration complete.”

The survey conducted by BIGresearch found this year’s celebrations will be far from tempered as more people plan to dress in costume (43.9% vs. 40.1% in 2010), throw or attend a party (34.3% vs. 33.3% last year) and visit a haunted house (22.9% vs. 20.8% in 2010.) Additionally, half (49.5%) will decorate their home/yard and 14.7 percent will dress their pets in costume. Other traditional celebratory activities include handing out candy (73.5%), carving a pumpkin (47.8%) and taking children trick-or-treating (32.9%).

With celebrations increasing, spending is expected to slightly increase across the board as well. The average consumer is expected to spend \$26.52 on costumes. This year, Americans will spend \$1 billion on children’s costumes, up from \$840 million last year, and \$1.21 billion on adult costumes, up from \$990 million last year. Additionally, pet owners are expected to shell out \$310 million. When it comes to decorations, more people this year than in the survey’s history will buy life-size skeletons, extra large inflatable pumpkins and fake cob webs, spending an average of \$19.79. Spending on Halloween décor is second only to spending on Christmas decorations.

“Thanks to creative costumes and décor for consumers of all ages, Halloween has become one of the most anticipated holidays of the year for many people,” said Pam Goodfellow, Consumer Insights Director, BIGresearch. “As a non-gift holiday, even people on the strictest budget can enjoy themselves this Halloween.”

Consumers aren’t completely blowing caution to the wind this year, however. According to the survey, nearly one-third (32.1%) say the state of the U.S. economy will impact their Halloween plans. To compensate, most

say they will try to spend less overall (87.1%). Others will make a costume instead of purchasing one (18.9%), use last year's costume (16.6%) and buy less candy (40.2%).

The survey included 9,374 consumers who were contacted from Sept. 6-14 and has a margin of error of +/- 1%.