



# Market Opportunities for Halloween-themed Products in Japan

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## Summary

Halloween is a relative newcomer to the Japanese market, having been introduced in 1997 through Tokyo Disneyland's "Disney Halloween." Interest in Halloween has grown exponentially throughout the years, and in 2014, Halloween sales surpassed Valentine's Day sales for the first time, making it the second biggest holiday event behind Christmas.

## Halloween Celebrations in Japan

Halloween was introduced to the Japanese market in 1997, through Tokyo Disneyland's "Disney Halloween." The event began as a single-day affair, held only on October 31. Each year, Halloween celebrations have grown in scope and length. Currently, celebrations at Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo Disney Sea begin in early/mid-September and include parades, costume parties for children and adults, Halloween versions of park attractions (e.g. Haunted Mansion) and various other events.

The popularity of Halloween has now spread far beyond Disney. Universal Studios Japan in Osaka holds its yearly "Universal Surprise Halloween," with family-friendly parades during the day and horror shows at night. Meanwhile in the Tokyo area, Kawasaki Halloween features costume events and a parade which drew 110,000 spectators last year. There is also growing interest in Halloween-themed dating events (Halloween-Kon).

Halloween festivities at preschools have become widespread, and Halloween celebrations at home have also become popular, as evidenced by the nearly 5,000 Halloween-themed recipes on Cookpad, a Japanese recipe sharing site. Many of the recipes feature specific characters, such as Mickey Mouse, Hello Kitty or Jack Skellington from "The Nightmare Before Christmas." Others utilize familiar Halloween tropes, such as ghosts and jack-o-lanterns. Some of the popular recipes are for decorative *bento* (lunch boxes) while other recipes are more party-oriented (cookies, cakes and other desserts). Although most of the recipes tend to follow a cute aesthetic, some recipes veer into the grotesque, such as a "brain cake" or "bloody finger fried chicken."

## The Japanese Halloween Market

Halloween sales have grown exponentially over the last few years. In 2013, Halloween sales were estimated at around 100.5 billion yen (\$817 million). During the 2014 season, the Japanese Anniversary Association estimated total Halloween-related sales at 110 billion yen (\$894 million), a 9 percent increase. This total pushed Halloween past Valentine's Day (108 billion yen/\$878 million) in terms of sales for the first time. This growth took place despite a jump in the consumption tax from 5 percent to 8 percent in April 2014.

Amazon's Japan site and the popular Japanese online shopping portal Rakuten feature Halloween sections, including children's and adult's costumes, Halloween candies and Halloween-themed

decorations. In 2014, Amazon noted that the popularity of certain costumes, such as characters from the Disney movie “Frozen,” meant that some items sold out by mid-October despite a large increase in the number of stocked items. Sales of adult costumes, in particular, have seen major growth.

Yahoo! JAPAN’s list of 2014’s most popular Halloween character costumes was dominated by Disney characters but the top spot went to the Japanese anime character Sailor Moon. Below is a chart indicating 2014’s top ten character-based and theme-based costumes along with sample prices.

### **2014 Top Selling Costumes (Yahoo! Japan)**

| <b>Character Name</b>                         | <b>Price (yen)<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Price (USD) [\$1/¥123]</b> |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1) Sailor Moon</b>                         | ¥2,580                         | \$21                          |
| <b>2) Characters from “Frozen”</b>            |                                |                               |
| Anna (child)                                  | ¥2,180                         | \$18                          |
| Elsa (child)                                  | ¥1,780                         | \$14                          |
| Olaf  | ¥3,280                         | \$27                          |
| <b>3) Characters from Alice in Wonderland</b> |                                |                               |
| Alice in Wonderland                           | ¥3,218                         | \$26                          |
| Cheshire Cat                                  | ¥7,640                         | \$62                          |
| Mad Hatter                                    | ¥12,000                        | \$98                          |
| Queen of Hearts                               | ¥5,324                         | \$43                          |
| <b>4) Snow White</b>                          | ¥8,478                         | \$69                          |
| <b>5) Rapunzel from “Tangled”</b>             | ¥10,800                        | \$88                          |
| <b>6) Police Officer</b>                      | ¥6,700                         | \$54                          |
| <b>7) Mickey Mouse</b>                        | ¥6,600                         | \$54                          |
| Minnie Mouse                                  | ¥2,905                         | \$24                          |
| <b>8) Peter Pan</b>                           | ¥3,855                         | \$31                          |
| Tinker Bell                                   | ¥3,780                         | \$31                          |
| <b>9) Nurse</b>                               | ¥2,760                         | \$22                          |
| <b>10) Witch</b>                              | ¥3,980                         | \$32                          |

Some other popular non-Disney characters are Harry Potter (4,280 yen/\$35) and Waldo from Where’s Waldo, called Wally in Japan (4,800 yen/\$39). Accessories are also popular such as a flashing ribbon headband (378 yen/\$3) or a cat costume set with ears, paws, collar and tail (2,807 yen/\$23). The store chain Don Quijote sells costumes and accessories year-round, and their Halloween website showcases popular trends in Japan for adults.

[http://www.donkimall.com/shop/user\\_data/halloween.php](http://www.donkimall.com/shop/user_data/halloween.php)

Rakuten’s Halloween section also features party goods. Japanese culture places great emphasis on gift giving to build ties and reciprocal gifts as a show of appreciation. Appearances for gifts, food, and events, also matter quite a deal, with a lot of care taken to choose appropriate wrapping, tableware and decorations, for example. Customers can purchase boxed sets of 20 mini Halloween-themed cakes (4,320 yen/\$35). Those who want to assemble their own gifts can find gift bags with ghost or jack-o-lantern faces (650 yen/\$5) or a pack of ten cellophane Halloween print gift bags.

<sup>1</sup> Prices are for adult costumes on Rakuten.co.jp unless otherwise noted. Prices do not include taxes and shipping.

Many people are interested in making desserts for gifts and parties or their own consumption. Cookie cutters can be used for desserts, but they are also useful for shaping savory *bento* lunch items. Some examples include a set of three cookie cutters in the shape of a bat, ghost and pumpkin (490 yen/\$4), a cookie cutter in the shape of a tomb (450 yen/\$4) and ten ghost-shaped food picks (195 yen/\$2).

Those throwing a home party can purchase party sets with cups, plates, utensils and balloons (9,600 yen/\$78) and a utensil set featuring monsters on the handles (972/\$8 yen). They can decorate the room with items such as a wall banner (650 yen/\$5), an inflatable ghost (1,610 yen/\$13) and a paper spider hanging ceiling decoration (1,500 yen/\$12).

### **In Summary**

As Halloween celebrations become more common, purchases of Halloween themed goods will likely increase. The Japanese consumer will be open to purchasing costumes, bakeware, decorations, and other innovative products. As a country that already had a culture for “dressing up” in gothic or so-called Lolita styles, market opportunities for U.S. goods still exist. For companies committed to entering the Japanese market, this may be one way to enter the large Japanese consumer goods industry.

### **Next Steps for Entering the Japanese Market**

Interested in the Market? The Commercial Service can assist U.S. companies in identifying opportunities in the market.

### **How we can help you**

The Commercial Service can assist U.S. companies in entering the Japanese Market.

#### **We can:**

- Introduce you to your local Department of Commerce representative.
- Meet with you on your visit to Japan.
- Provide counseling services via telephone/email/in person on the Japanese Market.
- We also have fee based services that may be of interest.

#### **We can:**

- Help find an appropriate local partner/agent through our matchmaking services.
- Promote your company/product line through an Embassy supported event.
- Send an Embassy representative to an off-site event.
- Provide customized market research.
- Conduct due diligence on a potential partner.
- And more...

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