The Grocer

Focus On: Halloween by Kate Halliwell (kate@katehalliwell.com)

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The Story

Value growth for Halloween goods in the grocers in the build up to last year's witching season was just 0.6% to £143.1m, according to analysis for The Grocer. But the slow growth wasn't chiefly driven by a downturn in sales of costume. So what's caused the sluggish growth? Which goods are people buying more and less of at Halloween and why? What have costume suppliers and retailers done to reassure parents?

Key themes:

Confectionery: Halloween is big business for confectioners. But last year value sales of Halloween confectionery fell and general sweets and gums slipped. Does this mean fewer kids are trick or treating or is something else going on? Are the falls in value the result of a harsh retail environment in which grocers are slashing prices to compete with the discounters?

The retail mix: This feature will pay close attention to how different retailers are looking to make the most of Halloween. The strategies of the grocery multiples (many of whom are converting whole aisles to Halloween 'stores within stores'), discounters and pound stores will be investigated in terms of merchandising, product ranges, pricing and so on.

Fancy dress: Asda says fancy dress is its biggest sector at Halloween. But last year then CEO Andy Clarke questioned how sales would fare after high profile incidences of costumes igniting. Sales are still in growth, although the rate of growth is half what it was a year previously; so what happened last Halloween? Which retailers enjoyed the greatest growth? Who lost out?

Squashes and pumpkins: This is the fastest growing part of the market, according to our data, with sales having grown 17.9% last Halloween. Why is this? Which retailers are driving this growth and how? Are these pumpkins only for carving or are people cooking with them as well. We will be looking to speak to pumpkin suppliers about this high growth area.

Adults: As The Grocer reported in last year's Focus On: Halloween, increasingly adults are being bitten by the Halloween bug. This feature will explore how retailers and brands are looking to capitalise on this trend with new products, marketing campaigns and in store activity.

Toys: This feature will explore how important toys have become for supermarkets that want to make the most of Halloween and investigate what manufacturers and retailers are doing to maximise the opportunities seasonal toys offer.

Home baking: Our data suggests that fewer Brits are baking at Halloween. Why is this? What are retailers and brands doing to encourage shoppers to dust of their pinnies and get baking at Halloween?

Innovation: This will be key to this feature. We will be investigating how new product development has shaped the category over the past year and what is in store for shoppers in 2016. We will be profiling eight of the most interesting launches in a separate innovation panel.

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?