RESEARCH REPORT | 31 OCTOBER 2026 | DUTCH RETAIL ECONOMICS

Can a Halloween Pop-Up Break Even in Eight Weeks?

Throughput, VAT and the economics of a short European selling season

Seasonal fixed + closing cost	Break-even completed/day	Base case result
€60,968	94.06	−€2,468

Executive summary

This report evaluates a hypothetical Dutch eight-week Halloween pop-up, not an actual retailer. Dutch consumer evidence in late October 2026 suggests a limited and late-skewed purchasing market, while Irish and British evidence demonstrates the need to distinguish different local markets. Official Dutch wage and VAT rates anchor two inputs. Every commercial parameter, including rental cost, demand, sales margin and throughput, is assumed.

The illustrative store incurs €60,967.68 in eight-week seasonal costs and earns €13.5041 contribution per completed €38 VAT-inclusive transaction. It requires 4,514.74 completed transactions, or 94.06 per trading day, to break even. With average latent demand of 95 per day, a final-week daily service cap of 190 prevents 228 transactions and changes an unconstrained €611.16 profit into a €2,467.78 loss. This is a conditional operational mechanism, not evidence of actual Dutch shop viability.

1. Question, comparison and scope

Research question: can a short-term Halloween store in the Netherlands cover its own seasonal commitments, and under what demand and service constraints? The comparison is an eight-week temporary store against the counterfactual of not opening it, before the owner considers permanent-shop seasonal shelves, e-commerce or other uses of capital. The results are store-level contribution, not economic welfare, corporate profit, cash flow or investment NPV.

The model assumes eight selling weeks, six trading days each week and 21% VAT on a costume, accessory and decoration assortment. It excludes food, whose VAT treatment may differ. The hypothetical shop is not attributed to Halloween HQ or any actual Dutch operator. It assumes that each completed transaction corresponds to one basket, with no intertemporal carryover of unserved customers.

2. Evidence and transferability

Evidence	What it supports	What it does not support
Dutch Acties.nl / PanelWizard 2026 [1]	Survey of ~500: 67.5% reported no Halloween purchases; 20.4% planned to celebrate	Not an observed amount of store revenue; not our weekly weights
Dutch VBZ / Peil.nl 2026 [2]	Separate survey of >3,000; narrower activity measures	Not directly comparable with broader celebration share
Halloween HQ [3]	Irish pop-up operator, founded 2012; >100 locations historically	Not verified 2026 store count or store margins
YouGov Britain 2026 [4]	60% of costume buyers expect online marketplace shopping	Not a Dutch market share or conversion rate
Dutch public authorities [5]-[7]	Pop-up premises rules; €14.99 adult hourly minimum; general VAT 21%	Not a lease quote, full labour bill or basket forecast

Source boundaries matter. Dutch surveys differ by question and sample, and should not be combined as a national Halloween expenditure measure. British purchasing evidence is contextual rather than a Dutch sales forecast. KVK describes temporary shop rules and leases without establishing a representative rental

price. All figures in the model beyond official wage and tax rates require actual local retailer records for empirical calibration.

3. Model assumptions and cost ledger

Parameter	Input	Class / treatment
Selling period	8 × 6 days	Assumed operating window
Average basket	€38 including VAT	Assumed transaction size; 21% VAT removed
Cost of goods sold	52% of net revenue	Assumed variable cost on merchandise SOLD
Other selling costs	5% of net revenue	Assumed card/returns and variable selling cost
Contribution margin	43% of net revenue	Derived: 100% − 52% − 5%
Weekly rent	€2,750	Assumed, €22,000 per season
Hourly wage, 21+	€14.99 gross	Official from July 2026 [6]
Paid staffing	110 hours/week × 1.40 loaded	Hours and 40% additional load assumed
Setup / teardown	€8,500	Assumed season cost
Marketing / inbound logistics	€5,000	Assumed season cost
Utilities / insurance	€3,500	Assumed season cost
Unsold stock loss	€3,500	Assumed loss on UNSOLD units only

Total seasonal cost F = 8×€2,750 + 8×110×€14.99×1.40 + €8,500 + €5,000 + €3,500 + €3,500 = €60,967.68. The 40% payroll uplift is not an official rate, a legal entitlement calculation or a CAO assessment. The unsold-stock provision is separate from the purchase cost of units sold; a model that charged the same stock to both would double-count inventory expense.

4. Contribution mathematics and VAT

Let P_g = €38 (VAT-inclusive basket), v = 0.21 (VAT rate), m = 1 − 0.52 − 0.05 = 0.43 (net-sales contribution margin), q_t = potential transactions in week t, D = 6 trading days per week, and K = 190 completed transactions per trading day. The model uses the following identities:

- Net basket revenue = $P_g / (1 + v)$ = €31.40496.
- Contribution per completed transaction $c = m \times P_g / (1 + v)$ = €13.50413.
- Break-even fulfilled transactions $N^* = F / c$ = 4,514.74 (4,515 whole transactions).
- Break-even fulfilled transactions per trading day = $N^* / 48$ = 94.057.
- Potential weekly demand q_t = average potential transactions/day × 48 × week share$_t$.
- Fulfilled weekly transactions $f_t = \min(q_t, K \times 6)$; unserved $u_t = q_t - f_t$.
- Season profit $\Pi = c \times \Sigma f_t - F$; no time value of money is applied.

The corresponding break-even revenue is €141,785.30 excluding VAT or €171,560.22 including VAT. VAT is not retained business income; these two figures are alternative presentations of the same break-even point, not additive revenue categories.

5. Weekly demand profile and the service bottleneck

Week	Demand share	Potential txn	Completed txn	Unserved
1	4%	182.4	182.4	0.0
2	5%	228.0	228.0	0.0
3	7%	319.2	319.2	0.0
4	8%	364.8	364.8	0.0
5	10%	456.0	456.0	0.0
6	14%	638.4	638.4	0.0
7	22%	1,003.2	1,003.2	0.0
8	30%	1,368.0	1,140.0	228.0

The profile is a scenario: 52% of potential demand falls in the final two weeks, with 30% in week 8. It is NOT estimated from the Dutch surveys. At 95 potential transactions per trading day, total season demand is 4,560. Week 8 demands 1,368 transactions (228/day), but the six-day weekly throughput cap allows only 1,140. The 228 unserved transactions cannot be recovered elsewhere under the chosen assumptions. Other weeks remain below the service cap.

The store therefore completes 4,332 transactions, generates €164,616 at till (including VAT), earns €136,046.28 in net revenue, produces €58,499.90 in contribution and incurs a season-level loss of €2,467.78. Unconstrained, all 4,560 transactions would produce a €611.16 surplus. The €3,078.94 difference measures forgone contribution from 228 unserved transactions; it is not total consumer spending lost to the economy.

6. Scenario sensitivity: customer arrival and throughput

Potential/day	Cap 160/day	Cap 190/day	Cap 220/day	Cap 260/day
75	-13,973	-12,353	-12,353	-12,353
85	-9,436	-7,005	-5,871	-5,871
95	-5,482	-2,468	-37	+611
105	-2,371	+2,070	+4,500	+7,093
115	+741	+5,602	+9,038	+12,279

Values are rounded euros of seasonal store-level profit or loss; all costs other than service capacity remain fixed. For the chosen 190/day cap, the model requires about 100.44 potential transactions per trading day to break even, compared with 94.06 COMPLETED transactions per day in the unconstrained arithmetic. This constrained threshold is solved numerically by bisection in the workbook; it assumes the same eight weekly demand shares.

Margin is also consequential: keeping the current fulfilled sales of 4,332 constant, a 38% contribution margin produces an approximately €9,270 loss, while a 46% margin produces an approximately €1,614 surplus. These are not probabilities or expected returns.

7. Economic interpretation and boundary conditions

A temporary lease exchanges rental duration for sales concentration. It can be attractive when otherwise-empty retail space carries a low opportunity cost, but lease flexibility does not substitute for local demand, service capability or merchandise economics. An extra cashier or fitting room would create value only if its incremental cost is below the additional contribution from transactions it enables. Our capacity test holds that incremental cost at zero, so it is NOT a recommendation to hire more staff.

The comparison with existing retailers and e-commerce remains essential. A permanent party shop may already have a lease, trained staff and stock-handling capability. An online seller may avoid fit-out and rent while bearing fulfilment and returns costs. The relevant decision is the incremental contribution of the pop-

up versus the operator's best available alternative, not whether the pop-up shows a positive result when assessed alone.

8. Uncertainty, identification and required data

- Demand: Footfall by day and hour, conversion rate, catchment size, online diversion and local event schedules. Dutch survey responses cannot identify store-level demand.
- Property: Actual signed pop-up offers, deposits, fit-out restrictions, restoration obligations, permitted use and opportunity cost of landlord alternatives.
- Labour: Scheduling, actual sector CAO wages, paid breaks, holiday allowance, employer charges, weekend premiums and hourly service throughput.
- Merchandise: Landed cost per SKU, returns, shrinkage, discounting, licensing fees, gross-to-net VAT treatment and residual stock recovery.
- Investment: Inventory purchase timing, working capital, corporation tax, financing, owner time, capital employed, and realistic alternatives to opening the shop.

The included demand weights are not a forecast. One-week service caps are stylised; actual wait times and capacity vary by hour. The model values lost transactions at constant basket and contribution margin and does not assume a welfare loss from turnover diverted to competing retailers. Neither the survey percentages nor the numerical exercise establish the number or profitability of Halloween pop-up shops in the Netherlands.

9. Reproducibility and controls

Workbook: Rokin_Europe_Halloween_Pop_Up_Economics_Model.xlsx. "Assumptions" holds blue scenario inputs and references for Dutch wage/VAT. "Weekly Demand" calculates demand, service limits, completed transactions, contribution and costs. "Sensitivity" recomputes results for different latent demand, capacities and margins. "Break-even Solver" uses an auditable bisection procedure. "Sources" separates documentary evidence from assumed commercial parameters. The validation requires weekly shares to sum to 100% and compares required completed transactions with maximum seasonal capacity.

Internal arithmetic reconciliation: eight-week costs €60,967.68; net basket €31.40496; unit contribution €13.50413; break-even 4,514.74 completed transactions; at q=95, fulfilled 4,332, unserved 228, contribution €58,499.90 and result −€2,467.78. A separate independent Python calculation reproduced these values at model defaults.

Sources and evidence status

[S1] Acties.nl / PanelWizard, Halloween 2026 survey, roughly 500 respondents, published 30 October 2026.

https://www.acties.nl/categorie/halloween

[S2] VBZ / Peil.nl, Halloween survey, more than 3,000 respondents, published 27 October 2026.

https://vbz.nl/actueel/laatste-nieuws/persbericht-halloween-nederlanders-op-jacht-naar-spoken-en-aanbiedingen

[S3] Halloween HQ, About us, operator account of past pop-up operations.

https://halloweenhq.com/pages/about-us

[S4] YouGov, UK Halloween costume purchasing survey, published 27 October 2026.

https://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/55824-spooky-season-spends-how-britons-are-buying-halloween-costumes-in-2026

[S5] KVK / Business.gov.nl, Starting a pop-up store in the Netherlands.

https://business.gov.nl/starting-your-business/starting-situations/starting-a-pop-up-store-in-the-netherlands/

[S6] Government of the Netherlands, Minimum wage amounts, effective 1 July 2026.

https://www.government.nl/themes/work/minimum-wage/minimum-wage-amounts

[S7] Belastingdienst, Btw-tarieven, general VAT rule.

https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/zakelijk/btw/btw_berekenen_aan_uw_klanten/btw_berekenen/btw_tarief/btw_tarief