

# #Halloween: Online Media Sentiment in 2020 Versus 2019

**Authors:** [Dr. Nicole Olynk Widmar](#), Associate Head and Professor, Purdue University Department of Agricultural Economics

[Dr. Courtney Bir](#), Department of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University



By October 2020 we were all aware of the many aspects of everyday life that have been upended by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A recent infographic in [Choices Magazine](#) by Eleanor R. Messer, Kabir Advani, Brandon R. McFadden and Trey Malone entitled [How Will COVID-19 Affect Halloween?](#) gave us survey data-derived insights into the ways in which Halloween is expected to be different this year. *The Economist* published [Covid-19 has Spooked Many Trick or Treaters](#), but also pointed out the potential for new traditions at home.

We've taken to online and social media analytics to determine if and how online and social media chatter, both in volume and sentiment, may differ leading up to Halloween 2020 versus Halloween 2019. Using methodology outlined in detail in the *Consumer.Corner.Article.01* [Social Media Analytics & Performance Tracking](#), we are now looking at posts and mentions surrounding a straightforward and intentionally constrained set of keywords: Halloween, #Halloween, Trick-or-Treat, #TrickorTreat, Trunk-or-Treat, #TrunkorTreat, #Halloween2019 and #Halloween2020.

**What's the point?** Understanding what people are looking at, paying attention to and talking about on social media as it pertains to Halloween 2020.

**Why do we care?** We monitor and assess perceptions of agriculture, agribusiness and food industries for research and Extension/outreach purposes. Understanding *how* and *why* consumer behavior changes – especially surrounding food consumption and socially important practices or holidays – is at the core of a lot of what we do.

**Why do you care?** Gleaning expertise in measuring and understanding what people want is important to all of us if we ever hope to answer the question, “What do people think/say/share about your industry, your areas of interest or your company?”

**Why Halloween 2020?** Well, because we wanted to know. Everything is different in 2020, it seems. How is Halloween being impacted? A variety of markets from candy to costumes are being affected. Plus, the 2020 winter holidays are just around the corner, and none of us really know what a pandemic winter holiday season will bring; however, a variety of food and agricultural markets are poised waiting to find out. Online media surveillance may offer us insights into what people are planning/doing.

**Summary of Findings:** The bottom line is that 2020 is undeniably different, but positivity wasn't lacking from Halloween 2020, at least online. Net sentiment was mostly unchanged (certainly not lower) than it was in 2019, although top terms reflected current times with emphasis on safety in light of the ongoing pandemic. Screening top posts revealed many residents found alternative Halloween plans revolving around distancing, plans with family at home and/or finding the positivity in the festivities even though they were referenced as 'different' or 'adapted' in many cases.

*Consumer.Corner.Letter.25*

An analysis by Nicole Olynk Widmar and Courtney Bir

Data collected via Netbase Social Media Analytics Platform for October 2019 and October 2020 on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

For more information contact Dr. Nicole Olynk Widmar [nwidmar@purdue.edu](mailto:nwidmar@purdue.edu) or visit

[https://agribusiness.purdue.edu/consumer\\_corner/](https://agribusiness.purdue.edu/consumer_corner/)

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