

# Qualitative Summary

GutCheck Marketing: Halloween 2014

October, 2014

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

### KEY QUESTION



How do candy preferences differ during Halloween compared to during the rest of the year?

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



1. Explore the preferences and habits of respondents around the Halloween season
2. How do preferences and habits differ (if at all) between Halloween and the rest of the year?

### RESEARCH DESIGN

Instant Research Community	20 Respondents	1 Days
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This study was executed via an online Instant Research Community™ where respondents answered open-ended questions and follow-ups posted by a trained moderator. This technology fosters a dynamic qualitative discussion where respondents are easily able to interact with others in the group.

## AUDIENCE

*The table below provides a high level overview of who was included in this research. Additional detail on respondents can be found in the [Respondent Appendix](#).*

SCREENER	ADULT CANDY BUYERS
<b>Completes</b>	20
<b>Country</b>	USA
<b>Gender</b>	Men and women
<b>Age Range</b>	18-65
<b>HHI Range</b>	40K+
<b>Custom Screen</b>	Last 2 weeks candy consumer
<b>Custom Screen</b>	Consumes candy at least once per week

## KEY FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

*This section is designed to provide a topline summary of the most important findings and implications from this research. More detailed findings, including verbatim comments from respondents, are provided on later pages within this report.*

### HALLOWEEN SEASON PREFERENCES, HABITS, AND DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

- **Consumers tend to eat a variety of fun-size candy during the Halloween season.**
  - Throughout the year, many people prefer fun-size over average or king size candy packaging because it helps them limit their sugar intake.
  - The preference for this size packaging is more pronounced at Halloween: in addition to the “year-round” benefit of portion control, fun-size packaging is ubiquitous and convenient at Halloween, and allows consumers to try multiple varieties without overindulging.
- **Convenience and access drive increased candy consumption during the holiday season.**
  - Respondents indicate that Halloween and Christmas are the two times of year during which they eat the most candy; this has to do with the perceived ubiquity of candy at these times of year.
  - Consumers tend to have candy close at hand more consistently during Halloween, as they prepare their homes for trick-or-treaters and share candy when shopping or at the office.

### DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS OF HALLOWEEN SEASON

- **During the Halloween season, consumers buy candy with trick-or-treating in mind.**
  - At this time of year, people focus on buying candy they think will be well received by neighborhood trick-or-treaters; for many, this means milk chocolate, peanut butter, and caramel fun-size candies.
  - Flavors that are seen as more sophisticated or suited to adult palates, such as dark chocolate or toffee, are less popular at this time of year.
- **Seasonal and novelty candies are a fun element of the Halloween season.**
  - On-theme packaging drives interest; when describing the ideal Halloween candy, many respondents indicate they specifically look for novelty packaging.
  - Respondents are drawn to candies that are only available during the Halloween season, such as candy corn; even if the flavor is not their favorite, they make the emotional connection to happy autumn memories.

## IMPLICATIONS BASED ON THIS RESEARCH

- **The Halloween season may be a good time to introduce new candy varieties, especially in specialty or novelty packaging.**
  - Consumers are more open to trying new candies during the Halloween season, given the availability of fun-size variety packs; trying a new candy is relatively low-investment, and consumers tend to be in a more adventurous mood during this time.
  - At Halloween, consumers are very warm to novelty and seasonal packaging; a new candy variety that leverages Halloween-themed imagery would likely be even more eye catching.
- **At Halloween, consumers are looking for candy that is well liked by consensus.**
  - Ubiquity is an extremely powerful force in driving brand interest at Halloween; consumers want to purchase variety packs of candy that they can be confident will be well received by trick-or-treaters, as well as enjoyed as leftovers.
  - Positioning that identifies a given brand or product as something that everyone already loves may incite trial and purchase, especially if the product is included in a variety pack with brands that already enjoy a strong reputation.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

*This section expands on the key findings above and includes verbatim comments from respondents where applicable. Note that some comments have been modified for misspellings and/or capitalization but the content was not edited.*

### Objective: Halloween season preferences and habits

#### CONVENIENT, FUN-SIZE VARIETY

**Overall candy consumption goes up during the holiday season.** Halloween, along with Christmas, marks one of two holidays during which candy consumption spikes. This has to do with accessibility: it is during these holiday seasons that respondents perceive candy to be “around,” and having the candy – especially in fun-size packets – easily at hand leads to more snacking overall.

Halloween - Christmas are super hard on me, because chocolate is everywhere during the holidays. Trick or treat candy starts me off, then I become addicted through Christmas! We give candy to people as gifts for Christmas, in their stockings, plates of candy with desserts I make, etc. It's just always so available during these holidays. So yummy! (Female, 34)

I usually snack on them between lunch and dinner or late at night. I don't do it every day just sometimes. Some days I don't snack in between meals at all. It's mostly during Halloween season and Easter cause we have so much left over candy. (Male, 32)

**Respondents are more likely to eat fun-size rather than average- or king-size candy bars during the Halloween season.** About half of respondents are in the habit of eating fun-size candy bars year-round, as they find the packaging helps them with portion control and calorie restriction. However, at Halloween, the overwhelming majority primarily consumes fun-size candy – even those who tend to eat average-size candy during the rest of the year. Again, this has to do with availability and convenience: consumers take advantage of sales and promotions on multipacks of fun-size candy packs, then they select from that mix in the time leading up to Halloween, then in trick-or-treat hauls and leftovers.

During Halloween, you have all the bags for sale of the mini candy bars. It's easier to buy them and they have a mix of a few types, which makes it fun. Sales help me decide to buy the bag as well. (Female, 34)

I definitely eat more of this type of candy because EVERYONE has it. There are amazing sales that go on this time of year. Kroger just had a one day sale at about 75% off the normal price. My wife and I already went through a whole bag meant for Halloween and busted into another one last night :-). Damn you Halloween candy sales. HA HA. (Male, 40)

I prefer this size year round since it helps with portion control. The Halloween candy my kids bring home is almost never average size and certainly not King size. (Female, 53)

**Respondents say they eat a wider variety of candy during the Halloween season.** During the year, respondents specifically purchase their favorite candy to snack on; however, during the holiday season, they base their candy consumption more on what is available and convenient. Variety bags of fun-size candy purchased for trick-or-treat distribution, or candy shared in the office or from children's trick-or-treat hauls, all lead to a diversification of candy intake for adult respondents.

I eat more different types during the Halloween season because there's more different kinds already in the house. It's the only time there is lots of candy just laying around the house. When it's not Halloween I usually have to go to the store to get whatever candy I want. (Male, 32)

Halloween affects what I eat, due to them having more options and bags with varieties available. It's fun to try a few brands that I would not usually eat, when you can try them in "fun" size. (Female, 34)

I think that I am less picky as to what I eat. I usually don't buy the candy I eat, but I'm offered it by people from work, friends and family. I eat more of a variety during Halloween as opposed to the rest of the year. The rest of the year, I usually stick with my milk chocolate with nuts or cookies and cream candy. [...] It's because during Halloween, there's candy everywhere, work, school, family's house. It's always out and tempting me, so I just go for it, regardless what kind of candy it is. (Female, 31)

## Objective: Divergences between Halloween season and rest of the year

### SHOPPING FOR TRICK-OR-TREATERS

**Respondents favor candy that suits children's palates during the Halloween season.** When buying and eating candy at Halloween, respondents consider what will be well received by trick-or-treaters, and specifically shop with their neighborhood's kids in mind. They tend to think of sweeter candies and simple flavors; fruity and sour flavors are more popular, and dark chocolate – which is a year-round favorite for many adults – is much less popular at Halloween, given perceptions of children's preferences.

At Halloween I tend to buy the candy that I really wanted when I was a kid. Other times of the year I tend to buy the candy that suits my preference as an adult. (Female, 29)

My candy preferences during this time is based more on what I think the children will like when they come to the door. I usually buy larger bags of candy during this time and also buy more of a variety. (Female, 50)

I like toffee, but from my experience not too many kids do. They seem to like peanut butter / caramel combinations and that's what I buy for them. (Male, 41)

**Nostalgia and holiday spirit drive candy choices during Halloween, increasing interest in seasonal favorites.** While candy corn and candy pumpkins are polarizing flavors, the limited seasonal availability drives interest and consumption; several respondents say they look forward to candy corn and only eat it in season.

I eat more candy corn during the Halloween season because it's more of a seasonal candy and it brings back so many memories eating during the fall time as a kid. (Male, 31)

I really look forward to candy corn. I love the kind that is different colors (not the traditional yellow). This type of candy usually isn't available other times of the year. (Female, 44)

Candy Corn. It seems to be a staple at this time of the year and I love it. Candy Corn, Candy Pumpkins, Other types of candy that looks like this. I would say that because everyone has it everywhere I go I tend to eat more of it. (Male, 40)

**Respondents associate the Reese's brand, especially the signature peanut butter cups, with Halloween.** The brand is well-positioned as the premier Halloween candy given the distinctive coloring and memorable television commercials, as well as its relative ubiquity and the affinity trick-or-treaters show for the brand.

I guess it's all the candy commercials on tv. Think of the Reese's peanut butter cup laughing in a scary voice. Reese's has made their product a Halloween product with their advertising. (Female, 30)

Gonna stick with peanut butter cups, it's what I buy the most for the kids around my neighborhood, pretty sure that's the one I get more positive feedbacks from kids on Halloween since I can remember, (Male, 35)

Reese's Peanut Butter Cups because that's what the kids in the neighborhood tell me to buy and to keep them happy that's what they get. (Male, 41)



## APPENDIX A: RESPONDENT PROFILE

*A total of 22 respondents met all screening criteria and completed the study. Demographic and psychographic information is included in the table below.*

PARAMETER	TARGET AUDIENCE	ACTUAL AUDIENCE
<b>Country</b>	USA	USA: 22
<b>Gender</b>	Mix	Male: 8 Female: 14
<b>Age</b>	Mix, Age 18-65	18-24: - 25-34: 12 35-44: 6 45-54: 3 55+: 1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Capture	African American: 1 Asian: 2 Caucasian: 18 Hispanic / Latino: 1 Native American: - Other: -
<b>Candy eating habits</b>	At least once per week	Multiple times per day: 4 About every day: 8 Every few days: 8 About once per week: 2 Once every couple weeks: - Once a month or less: -

## APPENDIX B: POLLING QUESTIONS

*Polls were included in this study to provide guidance to respondents and/or add an additional layer to the qualitative questions that were analyzed in this report. Poll results are shown below, but they should be considered directional and not serve as a means of statistical significance since this was a qualitative study.*

What size candy would you normally eat?	Poll Results
King size bar or pack	0
Average candy bar or pack	11
Mini candy bar or pack	11

What size candy would you normally eat during Halloween season?	Poll Results
King size bar or pack	0
Average candy bar or pack	3
Mini candy bar or pack	19

During what holiday season would you say you eat the most candy?	Poll Results
Christmas	8
New Years	1
Easter	2
Halloween	10
Thanksgiving	0
Valentine's Day	1
St. Patrick's Day	0
4 <sup>th</sup> of July	0

Please <u>select up to 3</u> ideal characteristics of what you look for in candy in general.	Poll Results
Dark Chocolate	8
Milk Chocolate	14
White Chocolate	2
Peanuts	8
Peanut Butter	6
Nougat	3
Fruit-flavored candy or gummies	3
Sour candy	0
Hard Candy	2
Toffee	2
Caramel	7
Butterscotch	1
Taffy	1
Mellocreme	1
Coconut	1
Sugar Free	0
Wafer	1
Novelty shape or wrapper / holiday design	2
Other	1

Please <u>select up to 3</u> ideal characteristics of what you look for in candy in HALLOWEEN CANDY. These 3 things <i>don't</i> have to all be in the same candy.	Poll Results
Dark Chocolate	2
Milk Chocolate	15
White Chocolate	3
Peanuts	3
Peanut Butter	7
Nougat	3
Fruit-flavored candy or gummies	3
Sour candy	3
Hard Candy	0
Toffee	0
Caramel	9
Butterscotch	0
Taffy	0
Mellocreme	1
Coconut	0
Sugar Free	0
Wafer	1
Novelty shape or wrapper / holiday design	9
Other	2