



Interest in “Pumpkin Spice” simmers down in 2025, social media analysis finds

By Dr. Jin-A Choi, Dr. Yi Luo, & Dr. Bond Benton

The ingredients of pumpkin spice may only be a mix of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, allspice, and cloves, however it has transcended the sum of its parts to become a cultural touchstone and important part of fall product branding for companies. Its ubiquity arguably began in 2003 with the introduction of “Pumpkin Spice Latte” at Starbucks (Nosowitz, 2022). From simple lattes to more absurd pumpkin spice offerings (including deodorant and bathroom tissue), the world has entered its second decade of pumpkin spice being top of mind at the arrival of autumn. 2025, however, presents potential challenges associated with trend continuation. Immediately after the pandemic, communal gatherings for shared consumption experiences generated energy and excitement from consumers (Choi, J., Luo, Y., & Benton, B., 2022). With that context fading, pumpkin spice’s role in the perceived renewal of shared public connection may be fading, as well. Additionally, price increases associated with food and beverages may make purchases such as “PSL” seem unnecessarily extravagant and potentially overpriced. Cumulatively, evaluation of the ongoing discourse around pumpkin spice in the online space merits continued scrutiny, especially in periods of change and transition.

This annual study is launched in connection with national Pumpkin Spice Day on October 1, 2025. Previous studies from the center (2022, 2023 and 2024) can be found on Montclair’s website.

Search Frequency: Pumpkin Spice 2023-2025



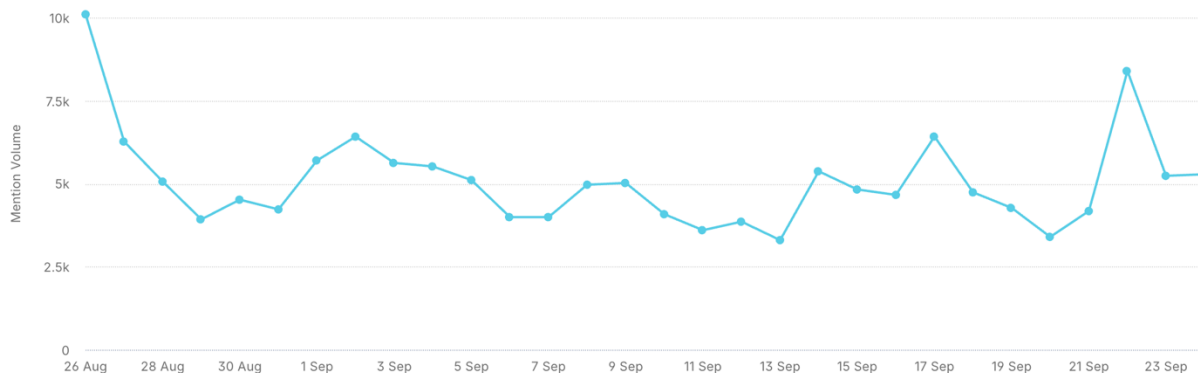
After years of increasing conversations, Google Trends analysis suggests that online searches for America’s Fall favorite, “pumpkin spice,” have declined for fall 2025. The 15% decrease in pumpkin spice related searches indicates the lowest level in activity post-COVID. Google Trends is a tool that allows emerging interests and popularity of trends to be examined in a specific time period. Google searches for “Pumpkin spice” was reviewed as searches tend to forecast behavior and attitudes (Silva et al., 2019). As the most used search engine, Google accounts for over 90% of all online search activity (Gaubys, 2023), making Google Trends data a reliable source for discovery of trends based on search behavior. To investigate the decline in pumpkin spice conversations further, this report examines the themes that have emerged from social media conversations surrounding 2025’s “PSL” season.

Method

Research has shown that the examination of the social media conversations provides insights into the public’s perception and attitudes while informing advertisers and relevant parties of informed decisions (Choi Park, 2021). Therefore, to explore how the public has discussed pumpkin spice in 2025, our research collects and examines social media data to understand the public’s sentiment, perceptions, trends and reactions to pumpkin spice using artificial intelligence (AI)-driven social media analytics tool, Brandwatch. Brandwatch’s social media listening tool will inform researchers on pumpkin spice insights for this study.

The parameters for this study were social media conversations regarding “PSL,” “#PSL,” “pumpkin spice,” and “pumpkin spice latte.” Due to noise regarding another trending key term, PSL (Premier Soccer League), much data cleaning was required and 60+ stop words were used to filter out irrelevant messages and terms to improve accuracy of data analysis. Over the period of a month (August 26, 2025 to September 24, 2025), over 152k data were collected from social media sites such as X (91k+ tweets), reddit (17k posts), bluesky (12k+ posts), facebook (5k posts), etc. from 104k unique users. The data collection began on August 26, 2025 in light of Starbucks’s seasonal release of the pumpkin spice latte (PSL) beverage which has unofficially but culturally become synonymous with the beginning of the fall season. As Google Trends indicated, the volume of conversation has fallen from previous studies in which there were approximately 209k conversations in 2024, nearly a 70k fall in social media conversations. Not only were there less posts about pumpkin spice, there was a 40k+ decline in unique contributors meaning there were less people talking about pumpkin spice in the social media sphere.

Volume Over Time



The usual seasonal enthusiasm for pumpkin spice seemed to be tempered in 2025 due to surging tariffs on a wide range of imported goods (Blake, 2025). Import tariffs from India, a major supplier of key ingredients (e.g., cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla, clovers, etc.) for pumpkin spice, rose almost 50% (Sugar, 2025). In light of this increase, the American Spice Trade Association (2025) warned that such steep tariff spikes would impose a sharp financial burden on U.S. consumers. As a result, this year’s pumpkin spice season may become more expensive for consumers. To explore how social media users have discussed pumpkin spice in the context of tariffs and rising prices, we set up another search query on Brandwatch. Specifically, the search query included terms such as “pumpkin spice,” “tariffs,” “pricing,” and “taxes.” The observation period was set between August 26 (the date when Starbucks launched its pumpkin spice drinks) (Starbucks.com) and September 26. Going beyond just a seasonal flavor study, we

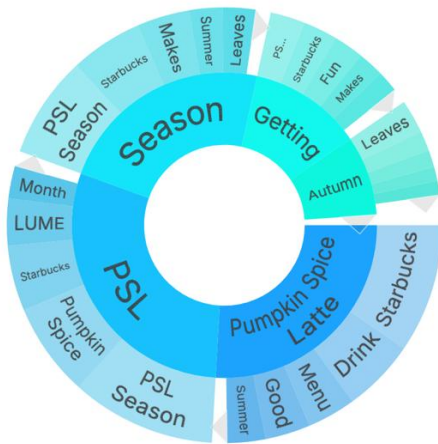
Results

As with previous years, there were more negative sentiment for Fall 2025 but much more neutral this year with negative sentiment occurring more as a result of humor and sarcasm. With only a 1% difference between positive (19%) and negative (20%) sentiment, this year's data actually shows a 6% decline in negative emotions. A closer look into individual emotions, disgust (41%) was the prevailing emotion but closely followed by still loyal PSL enthusiasts who showed pure joy (36%). Still, the negative emotions such as sadness (10%), fear (7%), and anger (6%) contributed to 64% in negative emotions in the collection of PSL related data.



Many social media users took to social media to complain and encouraged other consumers to reconsider buying expensive beverages from Starbucks. Cost-conscious consumers are leaving as a standard latte reaches around \$6 and Starbucks CEO Brian Niccol is attempting to bring company-wide changes to adapt to consumer preferences. However, Starbucks has also seen a surge of sales following the launch of their new fall menu, Pecan Oatmilk Cortado, and the PSL still continues to serve as a key driver for their revenue during the fall season. As evidenced by the surge in conversatiosn on August 26th, PSL's popularity, especially driven by Starbucks, continues to influence the Fall season heavily.

Furthermore, the ingredients for Starbucks' PSL was shared to highlight the health dangers of consuming beverages that are high in sugar content. Health implications are asked to be considered and some studies claim that the combination of sugar and spices in pumpkin-flavored products may trigger dopamine responses similar to addiction. Meanwhile, some debate whether there is actual pumpkin in pumpkin spice products and offer healthier, DIY alternatives to seek lower-calorie alternatives. Nonetheless, Starbucks is positioned firmly as the leader in seasonal beverage trend as "Starbucks" appeared in every word association such that the term appears alongside all key words "PSL" "pumpkin spice latte" "season" "getting" "PSL season."



As much as there was anticipation, with a flurry of social media posts celebrating the pumpkin spice flavors and scents, there were others who did not embrace the seasonal trend and expressed disdain for the omnipresence of pumpkin spice as brands continued to roll out their fall offerings, such as household products. The over-commercialization of pumpkin spice has firmly divided enthusiasts and frustrated critics and created a decade long debate that continues to unfold in 2025. Some have even called for a halt to the pumpkin spice

phenomenon altogether in both humorous and harsh ways. Humorous items such as “pumpkin spice” trash bags and deodorants sparked a backlash questioning the limits of pumpkin spice and how far brands will go to capitalize on this trend.

Pumpkin spice becomes a meme

The pumpkin spice has become so ingrained within the American culture that social media users have begun to associate stereotypes to people who consume pumpkin spice during the fall season. Not only is it a cultural symbol but a signifier or a certain type of person, such as “pumpkin spice girl,” “white woman” or “basic girl” who sets the standard of people who consume pumpkin spice products and décor. Pumpkin spice is no longer a product, it is a lifestyle. Social media users take to poking fun at these stereotypical women through memes. To add to the joke of pumpkin spice, beauty and lifestyle products have jumped on the bandwagon with skincare items infused with pumpkin extract, prompting more humorous commentary online.

Pure excitement and joy for tradition

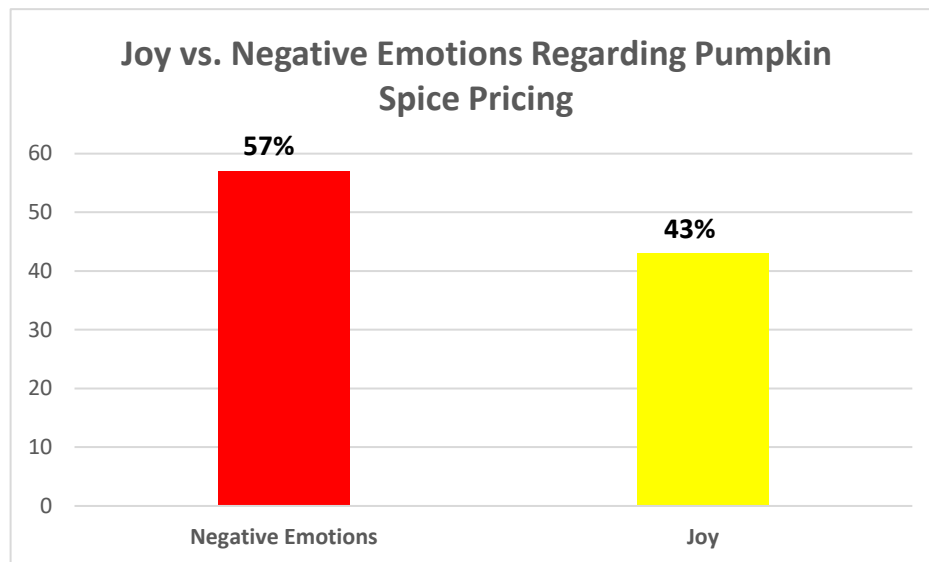
Despite pushback and disdain for an early end to summer, brands did not hesitate to release their fall offerings that include pumpkin spice. Centering their promotional efforts on pumpkin spice, social media posts encourage customers to come try their new fall menu. Likewise, social media users express their love for the seasonal flavor and share their experiences and recommendation for their favorite pumpkin spice item. A wave of celebratory social media buzz took over on the day Starbucks’ PSL was released and the excitement is not just for the drink but for the beginning of fall, bringing a sense of coziness and warmth. Pumpkin spice is featured prominently in recipes and menus connecting consumption to the tradition of fall gathering and nostalgic outdoor activities. Fall festivities are associated with PSL and fall baking is one such example that could make pumpkin spice a family tradition. Many are baking treats at home, such as pumpkin spice cream cheese rolls and muffins, which creates a sense of community among bakers sharing recipes.

The cultural significance of pumpkin spice has become monstrously big. Despite the mixed feelings it evokes among different demographics, one tradition during Fall could be that Americans argue about whether they love or hate pumpkin spice.

Impact of tariffs on pumpkin spice

Between August 26 and September 26, online conversations related to pumpkin spice pricing and tariffs rose 45%, reaching 12K discussions on social media. Notably, online discussions related to the impact of tariffs on spices such as pumpkin spice surged 70% in this period. Particularly, negative emotions such as anger, fear, and disgust reached 57%, surpassing the usual joyful sentiment associated with pumpkin spice (see the chart below). The volume of

social conversations on this topic was much smaller compared to the broader, playful conversations focused on pumpkin spice and “pumpkin spice latte. Tariff- or pricing-related discussions exhibited intense negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear, disgust, etc.), suggesting that social media users engaged more critically with this topic. By exploring popular consumer products with trade policy, this study highlighted a unique aspect of social conversations surrounding pumpkin spice in 2025—the interplay between economic policy and culture.



As the popularity of pumpkin spice rises with the approach of the fall season, consumers grew increasingly wary of a more expensive pumpkin spice season this year, expecting significant price hikes to their favorite fall spices. Not surprisingly, social media users voiced frustration about availability and affordability of pumpkin spices in stores and cafes. One widely shared X post with over 17K views read: “Bananas are produced nowhere in the USA so what domestic production is it supporting? Just shows you the stupid logic behind cocoa, coffee, cinnamon, mango and vanilla tariffs It was never about “defending American jobs.” Businesses felt uncertain about how price surges in essential fall spices might affect consumer demand and purchasing behavior, as a typical X post lamented: “ALL of them! Trump’s tariffs are bankrupting our companies.” As pumpkin spice has firmly established itself as a cultural staple in the U.S., the recent tariff spikes on imported spices may risk upending this beloved tradition. Social media users reflected that these tariffs on spices and other imported goods disrupted the current economic landscape, driving up costs for consumers. As American households prepare for the fall season and its related culinary traditions, online discussions indicated a downcast sentiment regarding the long-term effects of tariffs on consumer spending and the general market.

ASTA statement on reciprocal tariffs and trade policy. Retrieved from

<https://astaspice.org/resources/asta-statement-on-reciprocal-tariffs-and-trade-policy>
<https://astaspice.org/resources/asta-statement-on-reciprocal-tariffs-and-trade-policy>

Blake, S. (2025, August 26). What tariffs could mean for your favorite pumpkin spice treat.

Newsweek. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/what-tariffs-could-mean-your-favorite-pumpkin-spice-treat-2119480>

Choi, J. A., & Park, S. (2021). Infodemiological study on the use of face masks during Covid-19:

Comparing US and Korea. *Društvena istraživanja: časopis za opća društvena pitanja*, 30(2), 359-378

Choi, J., Luo, Y., and Benton, B. (2022). *Pumpkin Spice and Everything Nice? An Assessment of Social Media Mentions of Pumpkin Spice*. Montclair State.

<https://www.montclair.edu/newscenter/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/09/SCM-Pumpkin-Spice-Study-220928.pdf>

Gaubys, J. (2023). *Search Engine Market Share in 2023*. Retrieved from

<https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/search-engine-market-share>

Nosowitz, D. (2022, May 2). *The Fascinating Journey of How Pumpkin Spice Found Its Way into Our Lattes*. Better Homes and Gardens.

<https://www.bhg.com/recipes/seasonal/pumpkin-spice-history/>

Silva, E. S., Hassani, H., Madsen, D. Ø., & Gee, L. (2019). Googling Fashion: Forecasting Fashion Consumer Behavior Using Google Trends. *Social Sciences*, 8(4), 111.

Startucks. (2025, August 25). Starbucks PSL is back, joined by new Pecan Oatmilk Cortado.

Retrieved from <https://about.starbucks.com/stories/2025/starbucks-psl-is-back-joined-by-new-pecan-oatmilk-cortado/>

Sugar, R. (2025, August 29). A terrible week for pumpkin spice. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2025/08/pumpkin-spice-latte-tariffs/684046/>