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Measuring Inflation via the "Wayback Machine"

by Jerry Lerman (344)

A site not everyone might know about, at https://archive.org/web/ goes by the funny name "The Wayback Machine." I'm pretty sure it got the name from the old (1960's vintage) Mr. Peabody and Sherman cartoons that were a feature on the Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoon show. Peabody would go back in time using his fictional machine, but you and I can actually go back in time in cyberspace on this website.

I thought it might be possible to get a sense of how much inflation is eating away at our paychecks/income by finding prices of various goods on Safeway's and Walgreen's web sites of a few years ago – and then comparing them to the same products' prices on the current-day web sites.

I went to some extensive effort with Safeway's prices – and found some sizable price differences even across 4 dates in 2021, but a lot of prices hadn't changed, and some had even declined. A small look at Walgreens today found that the prices on the two products I could match up across the timespan actually declined from 2011 to 2021. (see **(a)**) It strikes me that something must be wrong with this approach!

I think I've found the "fly in the ointment." While the Wayback captures historical HTML which shows what the site displayed and how it functioned at each "snapshot," there's a dynamic quality that has been built into most commercial websites.

Aaron's Question Column

An Image of Halloween

A Day of the Dead face-painting

Question: I know that "Halloween" is a shortening or adaptation of "All Hallows Eve" and I suspect it's falling on October 31, which is the Eve of November 1st, means November 1st is "All Hallows ..." But isn't that day also the Spanish Day of the Dead? What relationship might there be between these holidays? What are some of the practices associated with one or the other - or both?
-Jerry

Aaron's Answer (A'sA): Despite being right next to each other during the year, and having some root similarities, Halloween and the Day