

The prevalence of brand switching among adult smokers in the USA, 2006-2011: Findings from the ITC US Surveys

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Recent studies have suggested that about 1 in 5 smokers report switching brands per year. However, these studies only report switching between brands. The current study estimated the rates of switching both within and between brand families and examining factors associated with brand and brand style switching.

METHODS: Data for this analysis are from the International Tobacco Control 2006-2011 US adult smoker cohort survey waves 5-8 (N=3248). A switch between brands was defined as reporting two different cigarette brand names for two successive waves, while switching within brand was defined as reporting the same brand name, but a different brand style. Repeated measures regression was used to determine factors associated with both switch types.

RESULTS: A total of 1475 participants reported at least two successive waves of data with complete information on brand name and style. Overall switching increased from 44.9% in 2007-2008 to 58.4% in 2010-2011. Switching between brand names increased from 16% to 29%, while switches within the same brand name to a different style ranged from 29% to 33%. Between-brand switching was associated with younger age, lower income, non-white racial group and use of a discount brand, whereas, within-brand switching was associated with younger age and the use of a premium brand cigarette.

CONCLUSIONS: Nearly half of smokers in the USA switched their cigarette brand or brand style within a year. Switching between brands may be more price motivated, while switching within brands may be motivated by price and other brand characteristics such as product length.

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