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Internet Little Cigar and Cigarillo Vendors: Surveillance of Sales and Marketing Practices via Website Content Analysis

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Abstract

Introduction—Cigar sales have nearly doubled as cigarette sales have dropped, and large cigars have been replaced by little cigars and cigarillos (LCCs). Many LCCs are flavored, are perceived as less harmful than cigarettes, and have become increasingly available from e-commerce sources. We conducted surveillance of the online retail environment in 2013 and 2014 for LCCs in order to describe characteristics of Internet tobacco vendors selling LCCs and their sales and marketing practices, youth access practices, and their practices in relation to cigarette and other tobacco product sales.

Methods—In 2013, we identified and manually screened 32,446 websites, yielding 500 unique Internet LCC vendors. In 2014, we identified 511 vendors selling LCCs from a list of 31,239 manually screened websites. We then selected 249 in 2013 and 263 in 2014 for content analysis focusing on six domains including demographics, youth access, payment and delivery, products for sale, promotions and claims, and prices.

Results—Just over half of vendors in both years were located solely in the U.S. with 70.1% of those selling flavored LCCs in 2013 and 76.1% in 2014. Nearly half *only* used proven ineffective age verification strategies and another 10% made no attempts to verify age at all. Most vendors accepted credit cards and advertised using the United States Postal Service. Half of vendors featured a variety of health warnings and most featured promotions.

Conclusions—Federal bans on flavored cigarettes and restrictions on age verification, payment, and shipping for Internet tobacco sales should be extended to include LCCs.

Keywords

Tobacco; Tobacco Products; Cigars; Tobacco Industry; Internet

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INTRODUCTION

Cigar sales have nearly doubled over the past decade, corresponding with a drop in *cigarette* sales following excise tax increases.¹ While cigar smoking has historically been associated with large cigars, market research shows that they no longer dominate the market, holding only an 8% market share, with over 91% of today's cigar market comprised of machine-manufactured, mass-merchandise little cigars and cigarillos (LCCs).²

Approximately 7% of U.S. adults smoked cigars in 2013.³ In 2015, more high school boys smoked cigars (11.5%) than cigarettes (10.7%), representing 1.4 million cigar-smoking youth.⁴

While little cigars and cigarillos have differing *legal* definitions, the terms are often used interchangeably by *sellers* to refer to products marketed as cheaper but comparable alternatives to cigarettes: cigarette-sized products wrapped in paper containing tobacco. Cigars have well-established adverse health consequences similar to cigarettes,⁵ but are often erroneously perceived as safer than cigarettes.⁶

In addition to being available through traditional retail channels, LCCs are increasingly available in the expanding marketplace of Internet Tobacco Vendors (ITVs). The world of online tobacco commerce is expanding; from 2000 to 2007, the number of English-language Internet vendors selling *cigarettes* rose (and fell) from 88⁷ to 497, peaking at 775.⁸ This was troubling, as online tobacco commerce has historically resulted in sales to minors,^{9–14} cheaper tobacco products through tax avoidance and smuggling,^{7–11,15,16} fraud,⁹ and other issues.^{8,10,15–18} While significant advances were made in 2005–2009 to regulate and heavily restrict the means by which *cigarettes* may be paid for online and delivered,^{19–23} these measures do not apply to the nearly identical LCC products on the market.

The 2009 U.S. Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (FSPTCA)²⁴ gave FDA the authority to regulate tobacco, and included restrictions banning characterizing flavors in cigarettes (excluding menthol) and facilitating excise tax increases. However, the initial regulation did not cover LCCs, which resulted in an influx of LCC “replacement products” hitting the market, designed to look like lower priced cigarettes and appeal to cigarette consumers. Some manufacturers simply made minor changes to their flavored cigarette products and relabeled them as flavored cigars.²⁵ Further complicating matters, 2009 federal tobacco regulation²⁶ increased taxes on small cigars much more than on large cigars, which led to small cigar manufacturers making minor product changes to add enough weight to legally classify them as large cigars *for tax purposes*, while they still appeared *to users* to be cigarette replacement products at a much cheaper price.²⁷

Increasing use of LCCs could undermine the public health benefits of declining cigarette use absent responsive and swift regulation and enforcement. Identifying how LCCs are marketed and sold is essential to informing the implementation of recent FDA Deeming regulations²⁸ and ultimately to reducing use. While LCCs are now subject to federal regulation, regulatory oversight of Internet LCC Vendors (ILVs) and enforcement could be challenging for several reasons, including the broad reach of the Internet, the rapidly changing online tobacco product marketplace, and complexities related to regulating interstate and international

commerce.^{13,29} Despite the rapidly expanding Internet tobacco marketplace, to date there has been no systematic investigation of online LCC marketing and advertised sales practices. To address this gap, we conducted surveillance of the online retail environment for LCCs in 2013 and 2014 *prior* to FDA Deeming regulations in order to describe the characteristics, advertised sales and marketing practices, youth access prevention practices, and practices in relation to cigarette and other tobacco product sales of ILVs. This study's findings can inform the development of new policies and enforcement of new and existing policies to regulate online sales of LCCs.

METHODS

Website Identification Procedures

We identified ILVs from a concurrent study of Internet Tobacco Vendors (ITVs) selling all types of tobacco products, using several sources to identify potential ITVs. Study sampling sources and procedures are described in Figure 1 and further detailed in a prior publication using the same sampling methodology.³⁰ The breadth and depth of our methodology resulted in the identification of a much larger and diverse population of potential ILV websites than previous studies of online tobacco sales using popular Internet search engine queries to identify vendors.^{31–35}

After manually screening 32,446 websites for eligibility in 2013, we identified 500 ILVs. In 2014, we identified 511 ILVs from 31,239 manually screened websites. While the approximate number of identified ILVs remained consistent from year to year, 46.8% of sites in 2013 were no longer in business by 2014, consistent with attrition trends seen in Internet Cigarette Vendors prior to federal regulation.⁸

Inclusion Criteria

We defined an ILV as an English-language website selling little cigar or cigarillo products for home delivery. Modeled after definitions by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we defined a little cigar as a small cigar similar in size to a cigarette, often including a filter and a cigarillo as a three to four inch short and narrow (mostly non-filtered) cigar containing around three grams of tobacco.³⁶ We combined the product categories because both *manufacturers* and *ILVs* often use the terms interchangeably, along with terms such as small cigar or filtered cigar (in product descriptions or packaging), making consistently distinguishing between the two product types as presented on ILV websites impossible, and as previously noted, some manufacturers made product changes that, while unnoticeable to the user, changed the products' tax categories, making distinction between the product categories impractical.

Using highly accurate³⁷ Alexa.com website traffic rankings,³⁸ the 200 most popular ILVs were selected for content analysis in 2013, along with an additional 49 ITVs that were not among the most popular *LCC* vendors but *were* among the 200 most popular vendors of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or other tobacco products *and also sold LCCs*. The same protocol applied in 2014 resulted in selection of 263 ILVs.

Coding Procedures

We used software to create offline browsable archives of all websites during a short time window, allowing for unchanging copies of the websites for an extended period of in-depth data collection, auditing, and data analysis verification using OnTrAC (Online Tracking, Auditing, and Coding), our proprietary data collection application built for analyzing Internet content. Two trained staff coded each website, and OnTrAC flagged any inter-rater discrepancies for resolution by senior staff. Using SAS 9.3, final records were analyzed and appropriate statistical tests calculated including frequencies, descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests for between group analysis and t-tests to test for significant differences between means from 2013 to 2014.

Measures

To gather comprehensive information about ILV business practices, data were collected across six major domains including demographics, youth access, payment and delivery, products for sale, promotions and claims, and prices. Demographics information collected from each ILV included the country(ies) and state(s) in which they were located or operate and whether or not they had a retail location.

Youth access features assessed included age warnings and what, if any, age verification was utilized. Age verification strategies tracked that *cannot* effectively verify age included clicking a checkbox and statements that merely ‘submitting an order certified the buyer was of legal age’.³⁹ Age verification strategies that could *potentially* verify age were tracked, including Date of Birth (DOB), by itself and with more or less rigorous strategies (examples of the former including using an online age verification service, sending driver license information, or claiming to verify age at delivery).

Products offered, prices, payment and delivery options, and promotions such as free shipping and tax-free sales were assessed, as were vendor claims (both accurate and not) including health and price advantages of LCCs over cigarettes.

RESULTS

Website Location and Characteristics

Of the popular ILVs analyzed from 2013 (N=249) and 2014 (N=263), most were solely online vendors, with about a third having an affiliated retail store (Table 1). While just over half were located solely in the U.S., in 2013, 20.5% had indicators of business operations spread across multiple countries, like a U.S. phone number and products shipped from a bonded warehouse in Switzerland. By 2014 there was a significant increase in popular single-country vendors ($p < .05$) and corresponding decrease in multi-country vendors ($p < .05$). Among popular vendors with a U.S. presence, most were in New York or Florida in 2013; by 2014, there was a significant decrease in vendors in New York ($p < .01$).

Youth Access

Less than half of ILVs (Table 2) featured age warnings on their home page, and there was little use of rigorous age verification strategies, with no significant changes in youth access

prevention measures from 2013–2014. About half *only* used age verification strategies that *cannot* effectively verify age, such as clicking a checkbox to verify age, and 10% made *no* attempts to verify buyers' age at all. The remaining vendors incorporated one or more strategies that could *potentially* effectively verify age, primarily asking for date-of-birth (DOB). Few claimed to use more rigorous age verification strategies like online age verification services, age verification at delivery, or sending a copy of a driver's license.

Payment and Delivery

Nearly all vendors accepted credit cards across both years, with a significant increase in those accepting PayPal ($p > .05$). Many also accepted various other forms of payment including bank transfer and e-checks (Table 2). The majority of vendors that did not accept credit cards also sold cigarettes (60.7% in 2013 and 78.3% in 2014), for which online credit card sales are prohibited.¹⁹ Almost all vendors shipped to the U.S., with the majority advertising using the United States Postal Service (which will not deliver cigarettes by federal law²³). Others primarily used either UPS or FedEx, the latter of which saw a significant decrease ($p < .05$). There was little advertised use of other delivery methods, and about 17% of vendors did not disclose their shipping company.

Products for Sale

Most ILVs sold flavored (excluding menthol) LCCs (Table 3), rising to 70.1% in 2013 and 76.1% in 2014 when considering solely U.S. based vendors. Given the ban on flavored cigarettes in the U.S., it is unsurprising that in 2013, no solely U.S. based vendors and very few a year later (1.4%) also sold flavored *cigarettes*. When accounting for vendors with combined U.S.-international operations, the proportion of 2013 vendors selling flavored cigarettes rose to 13.5% followed by a significant increase in 2014 to 34.8% ($p < .01$). In 2013, 36.1% of internationally-based ILVs also sold flavored cigarettes to U.S. consumers in violation of the FSPTCA ban,²⁴ decreasing significantly to 25.5% in 2014 ($p < .01$). Other products sold by ILVs included e-cigarettes, pipe tobacco, hookah, smokeless tobacco, and alcohol.

Prices for LCCs varied *widely*, with vendors' cheapest carton prices (with "carton" sizing defined by the vendor) ranging from as low as \$0.59 a carton and as high as \$550.00 a carton for high end small cigars, with a mean price of \$65.85, a median price of \$39.99, and an interquartile range of \$14.00 to \$99.50.

Health Warnings

Half of vendors mentioned health warnings (Table 3), with few featuring official Surgeon General's Warnings (some of which were for cigarettes, not cigars), and less than half featuring generic health warnings. ITVs that sold LCCs but not cigarettes were less likely to have any health warnings (38.1% in 2013, 45.4% in 2014) as compared to those who also sold cigarettes (75.3% in 2013, 71.8% in 2014).

Promotions and Claims

Most vendors featured one or more promotions, including advertisement of tax-free products (with a significant decrease by 2014, $p > .05$), duty free/export products, and free shipping.

While 14 vendors offered loyalty programs in 2013, these had disappeared by 2014. Other infrequent promotions like free tobacco and non-tobacco products were also featured. While promotions of the price advantages of LCCs over cigarettes were infrequent, there was a significant decrease from 2013–2014 ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that there were a total of 745 Internet tobacco vendors selling LCCs (ILVs) from 2013–2014, with many taking advantage of the differential tax and flavor regulations for LCCs, offering LCCs (some flavored) as a similar, cheaper, and legally available alternative to cigarettes. Highlighting the rising popularity of LCCs as a primary tobacco product and the expanding market of online LCC sales, there was relatively little crossover among LCC sellers and sellers of other tobacco products, with about a third selling cigarettes and even fewer selling other tobacco products like e-cigarettes.

The strong presence of ILVs in the U.S., as opposed to overseas, and the movement of cigarette vendors abroad,⁹ was likely related to the increasing regulatory restrictions on cigarettes as a result of multiple recent federal and state regulations that did not apply to LCCs. In contrast to previous findings for Internet *cigarette* vendors,^{11,16} only a small number of vendors selling LCCs had a Native American affiliation (2.8%), indicating that *Native* vendors are not broadly switching to offering LCCs as cheaper, less restricted cigarette ‘replacement products’ to circumvent regulation, as other U.S. ITVs appear to be doing.

The FSPTCA defined cigarettes as tobacco products, in any form, which, because of their appearance, the type of tobacco used, or their packaging and labeling, are likely to be offered to, or purchased by, consumers seeking cigarettes.²⁴ Our research demonstrates that U.S. vendors are offering LCCs as a replacement product for cigarettes, particularly the flavored filtered cigars released to replace flavored cigarettes banned under FSPTCA, and therefore could and should be considered equivalent products to cigarettes, and covered by the existing FSPTCA ban on characterizing flavors and the aforementioned restrictions^{19–23} applied to the payment and shipping of cigarettes. It should be noted, however, that our data carry the limitation of having combined cigarette-sized filtered cigars and products legally defined as cigarillos (taxed in the large cigar category) into one category. Enforcement of clearer distinctions in product categories and labeling would be useful to regulation of this industry.

Even without expanding existing regulations to cover LCCs, FDA’s August 2016 Deeming regulations²⁸ officially assumed regulatory control over *all* tobacco products, including LCCs, opening another door for FDA to prohibit flavors in LCCs and other tobacco products, which is an important next regulatory step, as flavored cigar sales increased by nearly 50% from 2008–2015, comprising over half of the cigar market.⁴⁰

With flavored tobacco products having been designed to appeal to young consumers and so-called ‘beginner’ smokers,⁴¹ recent data show that 40% of middle- and high-school smokers use flavored cigars and/or flavored cigarettes.⁴² Considering flavored *cigarettes* are banned

in the U.S. by the FSPTCA, it is not surprising that the majority of U.S.-based ILVs offer flavored cigars. Furthermore, tobacco companies use the same chemicals in little cigars used to flavor popular candy and drink products, such as Jolly Ranchers, LifeSavers, and Kool-Aid, creating “truly candy-flavored tobacco,”⁴³ possibly representing an attempt to appeal to consumers who previously used flavored cigarettes and/or candy-flavor-seeking youth.^{41,44,45}

Until FDA issues and enforces a flavor ban affecting LCCs, customers seeking flavored cigarettes can continue to switch to cigarette-resembling flavored little cigars with little perceived difference between the products.⁴⁶ This is of concern given that flavors have particular appeal to youth,^{41,44,45} and the availability of LCCs in smaller packs featuring fewer sticks appeals to vulnerable price-sensitive customers.^{47,48}

Further exacerbating the disproportionately high prevalence of LCC use among younger consumers is the lack of rigorous age verification strategies among ILVs. While about half of vendors used *only* age verification strategies that are *unable* to effectively verify age, of the remaining vendors who did utilize age verification strategies that could potentially verify age, many asked only for date-of-birth, which is easily thwarted by teens willing to lie about their age unless used in combination with a buyer’s contact information to verify their age with a government records database (a rare occurrence in practice^{12–14}). Though a minimal percentage of vendors claimed to use more rigorous age verifications strategies, our past research has shown that there is often a disparity between *advertised* and *actual* vendor practices, and those claiming to use online age verification services or verify age at delivery often do not^{9,12–14,49} (our team is verifying this with a youth purchase study of ILVs). Evidence of poor youth access prevention by ILVs provides additional support for the FDA’s forthcoming LCC regulations.

The low prevalence and lack of cigar-specific health warnings featured by ILVs may result in these warnings not being received in the same way by cigar smokers as by cigarette smokers, for whom the health consequences of smoking have been more widely publicized and targeted. Furthermore, the relative lack in featured health warnings among Internet tobacco vendors that sold LCCs but not cigarettes as compared to those vendors that sold both products may relate to the lack of regulatory and enforcement attention given to sellers of LCCs as compared to cigarettes.

Cigars have historically enjoyed a substantial tax advantage in the U.S.; eight of the ten ILVs that made claims with regards to the price benefits of LCCs as compared to cigarettes were U.S.-based. For price-sensitive consumers, particularly those living in high cigarette tax areas, switching to LCCs purchased online could represent a substantial annual savings of more than \$5,000 for a pack a day smoker. If LCCs were taxed similarly to cigarettes (and taxes paid for all online sales), the cost savings would drop substantially and diminish their appeal.

As has been seen historically on other ITV websites,^{7,11} promotions were common on vendor websites. They were not necessarily specific to LCCs, as promotions generally represented all products sold on the sites. Regardless, free shipping, tax-free and duty-free

promotions may be particularly attractive to price-sensitive customers and could represent an alternative and potentially more attractive and cost-effective channel through which to purchase products.

While nearly all vendors offered payment and shipping methods currently banned for cigarettes, 32.5% of ILVs sold both cigarettes and cigars and none noted that they would use those payment and shipping methods for cigars only. Presumably they were failing to comply with the cigarette payment/shipping bans, which would be consistent with the resurgence in the U.S. online cigarette market from 2013–2014, when the proportion of ILV sites that also sold cigarettes and did not accept credit cards increased from 60.7% to 78.3%. There was a similar increase in sites accepting PayPal (both payment methods are banned for online cigarette sales). Furthermore, while under the PACT Act none of the U.S. major shipping carriers may deliver cigarettes to consumers, ILVs offering USPS and Federal Express increased from 2013–2014. If FDA declared LCCs equivalent products to cigarettes, they would be affected by the same payment and shipping bans (they could alternately use the approach recently taken by California and expand all regulations affecting cigarette sales to apply to all tobacco products⁵⁰).

Conclusions

This study provides the first large-scale assessment of Internet tobacco vendors selling LCCs. These cigar products are rising in popularity in the U.S. and are poised to attract a new generation of youth and young adults to tobacco addiction. Understanding how youth and other vulnerable populations, such as price-sensitive consumers, can acquire LCCs is paramount to developing policies and programs to curb their use. With an already expansive and largely unregulated marketplace and many lessons to be learned from the regulation of Internet cigarette sales,^{8,11,15,17} well enforced policies, including those recently laid out by the FDA, are needed to ensure that ILV practices do not undermine the gains made in tobacco control and to public health. Tobacco manufacturers have adapted to the FSPTCA ban on flavored cigarettes by offering an equivalent replacement product in flavored little cigars. Our research supports the FDA's extension of the cigarette flavor ban to include LCCs. Furthermore, the current federal restrictions on age verification, payment, and shipping for Internet cigarette sales, as outlined by the PACT Act,²³ should be extended to include LCCs as well.

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HIGHLIGHTS

1. There were 745 online sellers of little cigars and cigarillos (LCCs) 2013–2014.
2. LCCs are sold as a similar, cheaper, and less regulated alternative to cigarettes.
3. Many flavored LCCs are sold online as a substitute for banned flavored cigarettes.
4. Only about half of Internet LCC Vendors feature tobacco health warnings.
5. Age verification (if any) used by online LCC sellers is poor and ineffective.

Figure 1.
Sampling for Internet Little Cigar and Cigarillo Vendor Content Analysis

Table 1

Demographic features of Internet Little Cigar/Cigarillo Vendors, 2013–2014

Feature	2013 N=249 n (%)	2014 N=263 n (%)
Selling from a retail shop	84 (33.7)	92 (35.0)
Native American affiliation	7 (2.8)	12 (4.6)
Number of countries		
One country ^b	197 (79.1)	228 (86.7)
Two countries ^b	51 (17.7)	35 (10.3)
Country		
United States *	163 (65.5)	160 (60.8)
New York ^a	45 (27.6)	25 (15.6)
Florida	35 (21.5)	34 (21.2)
Virginia	17 (10.4)	9 (5.6)
Pennsylvania	15 (9.2)	24 (15.0)
California	7 (4.3)	8 (5.0)
Massachusetts	5 (3.1)	2 (1.2)
Texas	5 (3.1)	9 (5.6)
Illinois	4 (2.5)	6 (3.7)
Kentucky	4 (2.5)	4 (2.5)
New Hampshire	4 (2.5)	3 (1.9)
Other [†]	33 (20.2)	42 (26.2)
US, state not specified ^a	2 (1.2)	12 (7.5)
International	117 (47.0)	121 (46.0)
Switzerland	15 (6.0)	20 (7.6)
United Kingdom ^b	13 (5.2)	25 (9.5)
Canada	9 (3.6)	7 (2.7)
Australia	7 (2.8)	6 (2.3)
Indonesia	6 (2.4)	7 (2.7)
China ^b	3 (1.2)	0 (0.0)
Hong Kong ^b	4 (1.6)	11 (4.2)
Germany	1 (0.4)	3 (1.1)
Other Europe [‡]	34 (13.7)	39 (14.8)
Other Asia [‡]	7 (2.8)	4 (1.5)
Other Americas [‡]	9 (3.6)	9 (3.4)
International (country not specified) ^a	30 (12.1)	14 (5.3)
Location not specified	5 (2.0)	4 (1.5)

* The percentages for all states are out of the n = 163 (2013) and 160 (2014) ILV sites based in the United States, not the full sample.

[†]**2013:** Other states include one to three vendors in each of the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington. **2014:** Other states include one to five vendors in each of the following states: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Washington.

[‡]**2013:** Other countries include one to three vendors in each of the following countries: *Europe:* Cyprus, Gibraltar, Netherlands, Netherland Antilles, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Europe (country not specified), *Asia:* India, Philippines, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, *Americas:* Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Panama. **2014:** Other countries include one to six vendors in each of the following countries: *Europe:* Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, France, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden, Europe (country not specified), *Asia:* India, Malaysia, Vietnam, *Americas:* Dominican Republic, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Cayman Islands.

^a $p < .01$ (data reflecting statistically significant differences between 2013 and 2014 are boldfaced)

^b $p < .05$ (data reflecting statistically significant differences between 2013 and 2014 are boldfaced)

Table 2

Age Verification, Purchase, and Delivery Methods used by Internet Little Cigar/Cigarillo Vendors, 2013–2014

Strategy or Method	2013 N=249 n (%)	2014 N=263 n (%)
Age warning on home page	115 (46.2)	131 (49.8)
No attempts to verify age at all	25 (10.0)	27 (10.3)
Uses <i>only</i> age verification strategies that cannot effectively verify age	123 (49.4)	135 (51.3)
Age verification strategies that cannot effectively verify age^f	214 (85.9)	231 (87.8)
User clicks checkbox/button	93 (37.3)	94 (35.7)
'Submitting order' certifies age	202 (81.1)	223 (84.8)
Accepts only credit card payments	1 (0.4)	4 (1.5)
Age verification strategies that could <i>potentially</i> verify age^f	101 (40.6)	101 (38.4)
Date of birth	71 (28.5)	82 (31.2)
Date of birth only	5 (2.0)	4 (1.5)
Date of birth + less rigorous strategy [‡]	46 (18.5)	52 (19.8)
Date of birth + more rigorous strategy [‡]	20 (8.0)	26 (9.9)
Claims to use online age verification service	16 (6.4)	19 (7.2)
Site claims age verified at delivery	34 (13.7)	31 (11.8)
Sending a copy of driver license	16 (6.4)	20 (7.6)
Entering driver license number	3 (1.2)	4 (1.5)
Social Security Number	2 (0.8)	2 (0.8)
Methods of payment^f		
Credit card	221 (88.8)	240 (91.2)
Bank transfer	53 (21.3)	55 (20.9)
E-check	51 (20.5)	46 (17.5)
PayPal ^b	35 (14.1)	54 (20.5)
Money order/certified check/cashier's check	29 (11.6)	31 (11.8)
Personal check	24 (9.6)	26 (9.9)
Western Union	9 (3.6)	10 (3.8)
MoneyGram	4 (1.6)	9 (3.4)
Cash on delivery/in-store ^b	3 (1.2)	9 (3.4)
Liberty Reserve	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
Neteller	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
Bitcoin	0 (0.0)	2 (0.8)
Other ^a	0 (0.0)	18 (6.8)
Methods of delivery^f		
USPS [*]	160 (64.3)	182 (69.2)
UPS	102 (41.0)	96 (36.5)

Strategy or Method	2013 N=249 n (%)	2014 N=263 n (%)
FedEx ^b	42 (16.9)	30 (11.4)
Courier service	8 (3.2)	14 (5.3)
DHL	3 (1.2)	7 (2.7)
Loomis	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
Pickup from vendor	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
Bongo International	0 (0.0)	1 (0.4)
Not specified	44 (17.7)	44 (16.7)

[†] Less rigorous strategies include user clicks checkbox/button, 'submitting order' certifies age, and accepts only credit card payments.

[‡] More rigorous strategies include claims to use online age verification service, site claims age verified at delivery, sending a copy of driver license, entering driver license number, and Social Security Number.

* ITVs that shipped to the United States were classified as using USPS if they used any shipping method that terminates with delivery by the USPS in the United States. This included all international postal services (such as SwissPost), "EMS," and more general references to "air mail," "international mail," "postal mail," "postal service," "express mail," and "priority mail."

[¶] Sub-categories are not mutually exclusive and results will sum to more than 100%.

^a $p < .01$ (data reflecting statistically significant differences between 2013 and 2014 are boldfaced)

^b $p < .05$ (data reflecting statistically significant differences between 2013 and 2014 are boldfaced)

Table 3

Products Sold, Promotions Offered, and Claims Made by Internet Little Cigar/Cigarillo Vendors, 2013–2014

Product	2013 N=249 n (%)	2014 N=263 n (%)
Cigar products		
Little cigars or cigarillos	249 (100)	263 (100)
Light little cigars or cigarillos ^b	65 (26.1)	51 (19.4)
Flavored little cigars or cigarillos [*]	143 (57.4)	161 (61.2)
Clove little cigars	54 (21.7)	48 (18.2)
Large cigars	217 (87.2)	240 (91.2)
Cigarette products		
Cigarettes	81 (32.5)	78 (29.7)
Light cigarettes, as labeled by the manufacturer	56 (22.5)	54 (20.5)
Light cigarettes, as labeled by the ITV website	59 (23.7)	53 (20.1)
Flavored cigarettes	44 (17.7)	36 (13.7)
Clove cigarettes ^b	15 (6.0)	27 (10.3)
Roll-your-own tobacco supplies	84 (33.7)	95 (36.1)
Herbal cigarettes	2 (0.8)	4 (1.5)
E-cigarette products		
Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)	52 (20.9)	69 (26.2)
Disposable e-cigarettes	40 (16.1)	41 (15.6)
E-cigarette starter kit	44 (17.7)	59 (22.4)
Electronic cigars (e-cigars) ^b	5 (2.0)	13 (4.9)
Other products		
Loose tobacco	140 (56.2)	156 (59.3)
Pipe or dual purpose tobacco promoted for roll-your-own cigarettes use ^b	16 (6.4)	29 (11.0)
Hookah or hookah supplies	35 (14.1)	35 (13.3)
Smokeless/plug/chew/snuff tobacco	21 (8.4)	29 (11.0)
Snus	9 (3.6)	9 (3.4)
Alcohol	12 (4.8)	21 (8.0)
Promotion or Claim		
Vendor health warnings		
Features Surgeon General's warning	39 (15.7)	49 (18.6)
Features other health warning	110 (44.2)	119 (45.2)
Vendor promotions[¶]	179 (71.9)	195 (74.1)
Tax free products advertised ^b	50 (20.1)	36 (13.7)
Duty free/export products	57 (22.9)	48 (18.2)
Vendor offers free shipping [‡]	112 (45.0)	120 (45.6)

Product	2013 N=249 n (%)	2014 N=263 n (%)
Other promotion ^a	30 (12.1)	13 (4.9)
Loyalty program ^a	14 (5.6)	0 (0.0)
Discounts	12 (4.8)	3 (1.1)
Free tobacco products ^a	5 (2.0)	9 (3.4)
Military discount	3 (1.2)	1 (0.4)
Social media promotion	2 (0.8)	1 (0.4)
Free non-tobacco products ^b	0 (0.0)	2 (0.8)
Links to social media sites	121 (48.6)	146 (55.5)
Vendor claims comparing little cigars or cigarillos to cigarettes[¶]		
Health advantages	2 (0.8)	2 (0.8)
Price advantages ^b	10 (4.0)	4 (1.5)

* Flavored little cigars or cigarillos is included in the overall count of little cigars or cigarillos.

[¶] Listed promotions/claims are not mutually exclusive and thus, results will sum to more than 100%.

[‡] Some vendors offer free shipping for *all purchases* whereas others offer free shipping at a *minimum purchase level*.

^a $p < .01$ (data reflecting statistically significant differences between 2013 and 2014 are boldfaced)

^b $p < .05$ (data reflecting statistically significant differences between 2013 and 2014 are boldfaced)