AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

MODELING GROCERY STORE CHOICE IN A SMALL URBAN AREA

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Knowledge of the spatial distribution of travel for different purposes is important in the planning of urban transportation systems. One such travel purpose is grocery shopping. This research examines the variables associated with the choice of grocery store of a randomly selected sample of households from a sampling frame consisting of the households in Cookeville, Tennessee, a small urban area.

A mail-back questionnaire was sent to each sampled household. Respondents were asked questions regarding socioeconomic information, last major grocery shopping trip, and perception ratings of four grocery shop alternatives.

Multinomial logit models for predicting shop selected for grocery shopping in the city were developed. The explanatory variables that were posited from theory to be likely to be associated with store choice were tested in the different model specifications investigated. Further, the size of choice set considered by a shopper seeking a location to shop at was also examined.

The model estimation output showed travel distance from the shopper's home to the grocery store, and perception ratings of store pricing, and ease of access/egress to a store were the variables associated with store choice that had the highest statistical significance. Most shoppers in the sample did not consider more than four alternatives when they were making a decision as to which shop to purchase their groceries from.