

Dollar Store Locational Strategy: National Trends and Micromarket Contexts

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Dollar stores have quickly become a ubiquitous feature of the American landscape. At present there are more than 41 thousand stores associated with the three major chains and a dollar store for every eight thousand Americans, with striking geographical variations at the state level. There are three thousand people per store in Mississippi but fifty thousand per store in Washington State. The distribution of dollar stores on the state level is associated with factors such as income and distance from the headquarters of the chains. Most Americans enjoy easy access to dollar stores, and some are faced with few if any shopping alternatives. The 'dollar store debate' focuses on the proclivity of the chains to favor low-income settings, notably in inner city food deserts. ILSR for example has mapped the correlation between race and dollar store incidence in four cities. To date, there has been little formal analysis of dollar store locational strategies. My paper combines a regression-based analysis of dollar store incidence at the state level with a focused micro-scale analysis of dollar stores' locations in three regional settings. These are Western New York, West Virginia, and Northwestern Nebraska. Contextual circumstances of dollar stores are assessed in detail through a focus on rural Western New York. Questions of competition, uncertainty in locational strategy, and threshold population can be addressed at this local scale.

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