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Presenting Author

First name	Family name	Affiliation	e-mail
Edoardo	Marcucci	DISP, University of Roma Tre	edoardo.marcucci@tlc.uniroma3.it

Other authors

First name	Family name	Affiliation	e-mail
Valerio	Gatta	DISP, University of Roma Tre	valerio.gatta@uniroma3.it

Title of the presentation

CAN RETAILERS PREDICT TRANSPORT PROVIDERS' PREFERENCES FOR URBAN FREIGHT POLICIES?
... AND VICE VERSA?

Abstract (400-500 words)

The success of urban freight transport (UFT) innovative measures crucially depends on local policy makers' knowledge and awareness of stakeholders' preferences (Lindholm and Blinge, 2014). Limited knowledge often results in coarse and undifferentiated policies that can backfire when reliable forecasts of policy effects for the various agent-types impacted are not available.

The literature in this context underlines the relevance an agent-specific approach plays both when acquiring data as well as when using them for estimating choice models with the intent of calculating willingness to pay (WTP) measures for the policies considered (e.g. Gatta and Marcucci, 2014; Holguin-Veras et al., 2007, 2008; Marcucci et al., 2015). With the relevance of these considerations in mind, given the cost and time the specific data acquisition process used implies, the present paper tests if a possible short-cut and less expensive procedure can be adopted while, at the same time, guaranteeing similar informative content.

The paper investigates the respective capabilities retailers and transport providers have in predicting each other responses to a stated ranking exercise aimed at measuring agents' preferences for alternative urban freight policies for the limited traffic zone in the city centre of Rome. In more detail, the present paper tests retailers' capabilities in predicating how transport providers would answer to the same hypothetical scenario presented to them reporting a possible urban freight policy change. Conversely, the paper also tests transport providers' capabilities in predicting retailers' preferences.

Results show that retailers are capable of predicting with a good level of accuracy transport providers' preferences for a given UFT policy while the opposite is not true. A major implication is that, with respect to the sample of agents interviewed and the city considered, one could interview retailers alone to understand also which would be transport providers' preferences for the UFT policies evaluated. This represents an important step forward in WTP estimation for policy changes when the substitution rates between the various attributes considered are the main research objective for a strategic analysis. However, one has also to recall that, given the role transport providers' socio-economic characteristics play in explaining preference heterogeneity, the decision to interview transport providers too should rely on the comparison of cost and time this implies with respect to the additional information made available. In other words, there might be specific research contexts where administering interviews to both urban freight agents cannot be avoided. However, in all those cases where only substitution rates between attributes are of interest a simpler, faster and less expensive questionnaire administration process can be implemented without risking to loose precious information. Future research should investigate the robustness and the transferability of the results obtained.

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