

WINTER TOURISM IN GREECE: AN APPROACH TO TOURISTS' BEHAVIOR AND NEEDS

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Abstract: Greece has been dominated by efforts to regenerate winter sports resorts and ski centers during the last decade. The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview of the profile of winter tourists in Macedonia Greece by the examination of tourists' behavior and their physical and mental needs through a case study of Kaimaktsalan Ski Centre. Specifically, the case study of Kaimaktsalan Ski Centre is examined. The questionnaire Tourist Role Preference Scale was used in order to collect the data. This research revealed the tourists' behavior and their human needs during their holiday. The main findings of the research indicated that half of the participants claimed that they sometimes feel satisfied with the winter tourism activities in general. The majority claimed that they are very satisfied with their physical and psychological needs during their winter tourism vacations. The profile of winter sport tourists in Kaimaktsalan ski center is mainly women, single, 17-39 years-old, university graduates, with full-time occupation and with a medium family income. It is crucial to take these results into account to employ the right measures to increase customer satisfaction. Thus, managers of ski resorts are advised to first discover the structure and segments of their clientele, and then analyze their satisfaction surveys by considering the moderating effects of lifestyles, spending levels and skiers' skills.

Key words: environment, human needs, ski center, tourist behavior, winter tourism, sport tourism

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INTRODUCTION

Sport tourism and leisure

Tourism is conceptualized as a 'special form' of leisure. The term sport tourism has been adopted in recent years to describe sport related leisure travel (Gibson, 1998). Leisure/tourism become ways of making knowledge: the individual comes to know about

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the world in new, more complex ways. The individual activates, influences and negotiates, acts subjectively. Thinking in terms of 'the subject' permits the consideration of human activity rather than of the individual being only the object of numerous events impacting, determinedly, on him/her (Pile & Thrift, 1995). It enables a focus on leisure/tourism as encounters. Interpreting leisure/tourism it is easy to note the representation and not the practice, partly because of the requirements of appropriate research methods. In all tourism/leisure practices the individual is surrounded by space. The encounter with the world can also be expressive. Leisure/tourism are moments of expression through the body that activate places. Leisure/tourism spaces are sites of friendship and social engagement and become meaningful through the ways in which people are encountered. Harre's notion of 'the feeling of doing' points to that component of leisure/tourism where the individual has a sense of abutting a surrounding world and thereby of engaging that world of people, materiality and so on. This is captured and developed, unevenly, through interpenetrating awareness of surrounding volume and its characteristics, which may be exemplified in a park or a ski slope. There is a considerable challenge for leisure research to unpick and to articulate this greater complexity of what leisure means in relation to everyday life (Crouch, 2000). When speaking of leisure, Pearce and Lee (2005) identified the four core motives for undertaking this type of travelling as: escape and relaxation; social interaction; novelty seeking; and self-development. People have been aware for a long period of time that health and well-being are improved by leisure activities in natural settings (Pretty et al., 2005; İlieş et al., 2013). Leisure has a social dimension (Godbey et al., 2005), since people are motivated by social interaction and personal competence to engage in leisure activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Leisure related social interaction is an important concept with strong relevance to active living (Freysinger, 1999). Many leisure and tourism activities are undertaken in order to make contact socially, so the desire for social contact may be recognized as one of the key motivational factors for these activities.

Meanwhile, according to Crouch (2000), leisure/tourism is important in the '... figuring and re-figuring an account of a place', constituting processes that are negotiated and shaped in the context of human relationships and emotions. Importantly, Crouch (2000) contends, it is the characteristics of place rather than 'nostalgia' that establishes the link between leisure/tourism and identities. Subjectivities are important in these linkages, along with signification of the material content of places. Therefore, travel and tourism to Albania during summer and having access to the sea are, for participants, important elements of transnational movements, as it is the case with leisure. It is time for more studies on such movements that link the different parts and people of the Balkans and their diasporans in webs of leisure and tourist movements (Vathi, 2015).

Different individuals engage in the same activities, but those activities will be classified as leisure or tourism activities, depending on the interpretations of 'leisure' and 'tourism' that are used (Hede & Hall, 2006). Cohen and Cohen (2012) suggest a method of better understanding tourist behaviour is to consider it part of an individual's overall lifestyle, with a particular focus on leisure behaviour. People frequently take part in activities similar to their everyday leisure pursuits when on vacation, which means there is behavioural consistency in their leisure behaviour in the tourism context. Ryan (1994) found a parallel between holiday and leisure activities based on the similarity of their behavioural patterns, in areas such as relaxation, skill acquisition and self-development. Leisure and tourism literature (Brey & Lehto, 2007; Chang & Gibson, 2015) has been primarily focused on single leisure activity (mainly sport activity) as a means of explaining the leisure tourism continuum, this research conducted broadens understanding of leisure behaviour as set of different leisure activities which are consistent within the tourism framework. Therefore, the motivation for leisure and

tourism could be regarded as similar, especially if the activity includes clear elements of both. People are motivated to participate in a leisure activity to satisfy certain needs, which is also common with the goals of tourism.

Alpine destinations and ski resorts

Physical separation causes people to desire different recreational, climate, environmental, and cultural experiences has also become a reason to equate a tourist destination. Destinations will use their name, term, symbol, and design to distinguish themselves from other competitors and obtain unique advantages (Liang, 2017). According to the argument of Tangeland, Vennessland and Nybakk (2013), nature-based tourism activities, that is, commercial or non-commercial activities held primarily in a natural setting, are dependent on or enhanced by the natural environment.

Further, the theory posits that if a person can find another activity through which they receive equal fulfilment, they are likely to be more willing to substitute. The theory has been utilized in a previous study of demand side adaptation options in alpine settings (Dawson et al., 2013), thus supporting its relevance to the context of the current study. The relevance of the theory of leisure substitution in behavioral adaptation becomes evident. Place attachment is recognized as a dichotomous construct, consisting of place dependence, or the usefulness of a place as a facilitator of leisure participation and place identity, representing a psychological or emotional connection to place (Williams & Stewart, 1998). Place attachment has previously been applied to the context of recreation in alpine settings (Alexandris et al., 2006). Alexandris et al., (2006) examined the impact of place attachment and service quality on loyalty at a ski resort. The study found that place attachment was highly correlated with customer loyalty, suggesting the propensity of place attachment to represent the likelihood of loyalty among tourists at a ski destination. It is also possible that the Australian market is already substituting their leisure, and travelling overseas to participate in winter sports at destinations perceived to have better natural snowfall than in Australia (Cocolas et al., 2016).

Behringer, Bürki and Fuhrer (2000) and König (1998) studied the skiers' behavior under specific scenarios. They found that skiers are very adaptable and can easily change their destination and the timing of their trips, or replace the ski activity with another leisure activity (e.g., a beach holiday). Also, Bürki (2000) asked skiers from Switzerland, to respond whether they would change their plans in a hypothetical scenario of climate change. In particular, the skiers were interviewed about "Where and how often would they do skiing, if they knew that the next five winters would have very little snow? ". The majority of the participants (58%) responded that they would continue skiing with the same frequency (30% in the same resort and 28% in a more reliable resort). Almost a third (32%) of the respondents replied that they would ski less often and only 4% said they would stop skiing. Hard-core skiers are motivated by skiing conditions as well as fun and excitement. As a result, ski challenges would be attractive to this segment. However, this segment will not be satisfied if snow cover is reduced and is therefore likely to be only attracted to resorts at the peak or optimum time of the ski season (Hall et al., 2017). It is important to reiterate that the entire ski industry is not at risk to climate change, rather it will be individual ski areas that are either unable to adapt or withstand changes in ski demand. Differential vulnerabilities within the ski industry result from technical snowmaking capabilities, location (i.e., latitude, elevation, proximity to markets) and business models (e.g., resort size, winter versus an all-season resort, diverse ownership structures and access to capital) (Rutty et al., 2017). Littering, skiing off-piste, and skiing through vegetation at times of low snow level, have all been found to be environmentally damaging aspects of skiers' behavior. To change this behavior, it is necessary to create a condition of 'dissonance' in the skier's mind, that is a conflict between what the skiers

know and how they are behaving. For instance, if a skier knows that by skiing off-piste they are disturbing and harming wildlife, they are in a state of dissonance. The effect of this is to create an imbalance, which means the skier is taking corrective action to cope with it. For some skiers, the action would be to adopt corrective behavior to reduce the level of dissonance (i.e. stop skiing off-piste) but for other skiers it may be to accommodate this knowledge and carry on with the same behavior through an internalized justification of their actions (Holden, 2000).

Although the major winter sports centers have demonstrated a clear capacity to adapt, their future is not necessarily assured. Competition between resorts remains intense. As the number of skiers in Europe has stabilized, resorts, in their attempts to maintain market share, have been challenged increasingly. In this context, they still face certain shortcomings. For instance, resorts located at a high altitude continue to lack charm and character, and attracting tourists in summer remains difficult; situated close to the tree-line, the mountain landscape is less aesthetically appealing than at a lower altitude, and the uninspiring architecture appears even less inviting than when partially snow-covered in winter. Currently the appeal of these resorts is largely restricted to their range of sporting activities. For this to change, the establishments require further refurbishment and embellishment, activities need to be diversified and the growth of a permanent population would help increase the range of services offered to tourists, rendering these localities more attractive (Tuppen, 2000). Nicholls (2006) has concentrated on the potential impacts of climate change on tourism and outdoor recreation in Europe. The relationship between climate change, recreation and tourism, is of a two-way nature, however. Tourism, in particular, is a major contributor to global warming, due to the greenhouse gas emissions associated with tourism activity. To maximize its effectiveness, future recreation, tourism and climate change research must be carried out using an inter-disciplinary approach and by a broader range of scientists than have previously participated (Kontogianni & Kouthouris, 2014; Tătar & Herman, 2013).

Winter tourism

Winter tourism is of great economic importance for the eastern Alpine regions of Europe. In certain regions, winter tourism accounts for 20% of the created economic value and provides thousands of jobs (CIPRA, 2003). There are tourists who desire to combine their vacation with sports. Specifically, this choice is a combination of an athletic activity and amusement. However, there are tourists who decide to spend their winter vacation at ski centers or at traditional mountain villages. Thus, they are engaged with winter sports, such as ski, ice-skating, snowboard and curling (Bank, 2011). Also, it was discovered that winter tourism is related to spa tourism. Thus, there are tourists who desire to spend their winter vacation at saunas and Turkish bath facilities. Winter tourists have a different approach when it comes to the selection of vacation. In other words, winter tourists behave totally different than the classic tourists. Winter tourists wish to visit ski centers in order to acquire experiences through sport activities. On the other hand, the classic tourists desire to visit ski centers in order to see the landscapes and relax (Falk, 2010).

Furthermore, winter tourism is a form of tourism that has an unprecedented bloom across the globe. Specifically, winter tourism is famous in countries that have been established as popular ski resorts. For instance, the city of Turin decided to build a ski center in the Italian Alps to promote winter sport tourism in the area (Gios et al., 2006). Leisure services are important assets for the prosperity of cities and regions. The last decades have witnessed a debate on the importance of leisure and tourism services by both scholars and local and national policy-makers. The influences of leisure and tourism services on the performance of a local economy are manifold. First, leisure and hospitality services often represent a significant share of the total economic activity in a region. This

characteristic of leisure services makes them potentially important for employment and growth. Second, these services are recognized as essential for the attractiveness of a region. Leisure and tourism services can be thought of as regional amenities because they make available a range of possibilities for consumption, experiences, and recreational activities. New Economic Geography (NEG) offers a microeconomic theoretical underpinning for the concept of market potential. The idea is used to work out the market demand over distances. This line of theorizing is especially suitable for modelling demand directed to service providers. This is because the sale of services is especially distance sensitive. Naturally, this is true for leisure services where customers need to travel to take part in the consumption of them. It is argued that in order to appreciate the importance of demand for the presence of leisure services in a local market, it is crucial to take the spatial continuum of demand into account. The almost universal, but not random, flux of population and economic activities among growing and declining localities and regions influence services that are dependent on close by customers. In this ever-changing landscape of demand some regions gain and some lose, with great significance following for the leisure service sector (Öner & Klaesson, 2017).

Winter tourism in Greece achieved a rapid rise in recent years with the creation of several ski centers and hosting sites. An intense promotion of winter tourism, especially in the northern part of Greece where the climate and topography allows the construction of ski centers, has been observed. The activities, carried out during the winter, are related to skiing, where appropriate equipment and infrastructure are needed. Most skiers in Greek ski centers combine skiing with relaxation and visits to the nearby ancient monuments. Furthermore, winter tourism has become more popular in Greece the last decade, especially after 2005. According to Paulopoulos (2001), winter sports were invented by the British leisure classes at the Swiss villages of Zermatt (Valais) and St. Moritz in 1864. The first winter sports package holidays took place in 1902 at Adelboden, Switzerland. Winter sports were a natural answer for a leisure class looking for amusement during the coldest season. Therefore, winter tourism is the vacation attitude when tourists combine winter sports with relaxing. Furthermore, Paulopoulos (2001) supports that winter tourism could be categorized as ski tourism, winter sport tourism and the winter Olympic Games tourism. In Greece, the most popular places, which show excess winter sports activity, are Macedonia, Thessaly, Ipiros, Central Greece, Peloponnese and Crete. The most commonly known ski Centers in Greece are Vasilitsa, Pilio, Arachova, Psiloritis and Kaimaktsalan.

Sport events represent the most fast developing sector of tourism market and the research of Funk et al., (2006), underline the importance of social-psychological motives concerning sport event and the cultural-educational motives concerning international travel. More specifically in order to increase tourism we should study ways of handling with respect the important experience of tourists, which is the behaviour that reflects the original motives (Foo et al., 2004; Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002). Gibson et al., (2002), described tourist behaviour by 15 tourists roles and 3 of them concerned sports tourism: active sports tourist, explorer and thrill seeker. Also, based on another research of Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulos (2008), the incentive of a tourist to travel and to participate in tourism activities can be defined as a set of needs and behaviors. Furthermore, the motivations derive from the basic psychological and sociological needs, which enhance the specific tourist behavior. Finally, the researchers have identified that there are differences between gender and age concerning the choice of a specific sport tourist behavior. Demographic characteristics were used in many researches in order to analyze tourist behavior. In this direction Henderson (2009) referred that gender has emerged as an influential moderating variable in leisure and tourism research, since

men and women are qualitatively different in the nature of their roles, constraints, social expectations and socializing forces. Males are more drawn towards things that present challenge and competition, whereas females spend less time outdoors and place more importance on social items (McFarland et al., 2014). Educational level is another predictor for leisure and tourism activities. Droomers, Schrijvers, van de Mheen and Mackenbach (1998) found a clear correlation between educational level and physical inactivity, with groups who have a higher education level being more physically active in their leisure time. Nature Seekers are generally motivated by socialising and looking for relaxation and escape in nature as main domains in their leisure time. Nature Seekers – whose leisure behaviour is more oriented towards nature, relaxation and social interaction – make tourism choices based on their habits in their home environment. In this respect, the presence of evidence for leisure behaviour and tourism choice is once again confirmed (Marinkovic et al., 2016).

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview of the profile of winter tourists in Macedonia Greece by the examination of tourists' behavior and their physical and mental needs through a case study of Kaimaktsalan Ski Centre. Thus, the statistic hypotheses explored if there are any differences to tourists' behavior and their needs (physical and psychological), due to their gender, age, occupation and personal income.

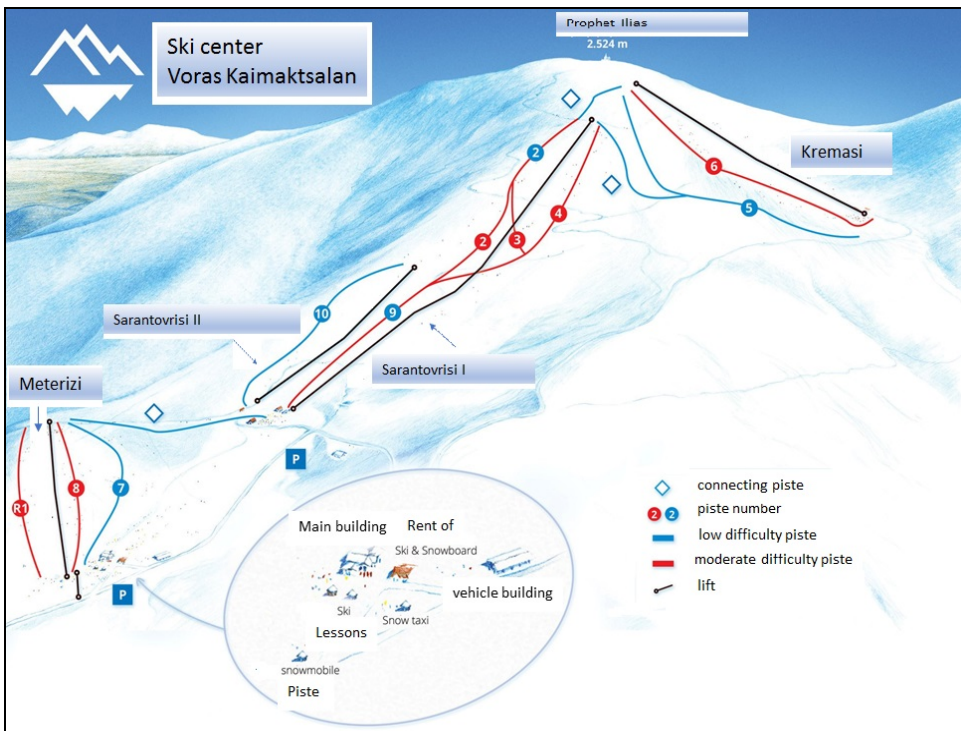


Figure 1. Kaimaktsalan Ski Center graphic of piste and lifts (Source: <http://kaimaktsalan.gr/>)

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample were 274 tourists who visited the ski center of Kaimaktsalan in Northern Greece during the period of January-March 2013.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is based on the “Tourist Roles Preference Scale” of Gibson and Yiannakis (2002), and was translated in Greek by Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulos (2008). The questionnaire included 92 Likert Questions (5-scale) and closed-ended questions that recorded: (a) a description of tourist’s activities with 34 questions, (b) a section of preferred sports activities with 26 questions, (c) an examination of major human needs with 22 questions, (d) demographical and personal data with 7 questions and, (e) certain destination preference with 3 questions. The methodology of this research is based on the academic paper of Yfantidou et al., (2008) in which they used the Tourist Role Preference Scale (TRPS) to investigate their case. They explored the tourists’ roles in Greece and especially the roles related to sport tourism. The research results showed that the TRPS seems to be applicable in Greece. Also, they discovered that the tourists’ behavior could be categorized in various tourist roles and the most frequent roles in Greece were: "Sun Lover", "Anthropologist", "Archaeologist", "the Independent Mass Tourist" and "Escapist".

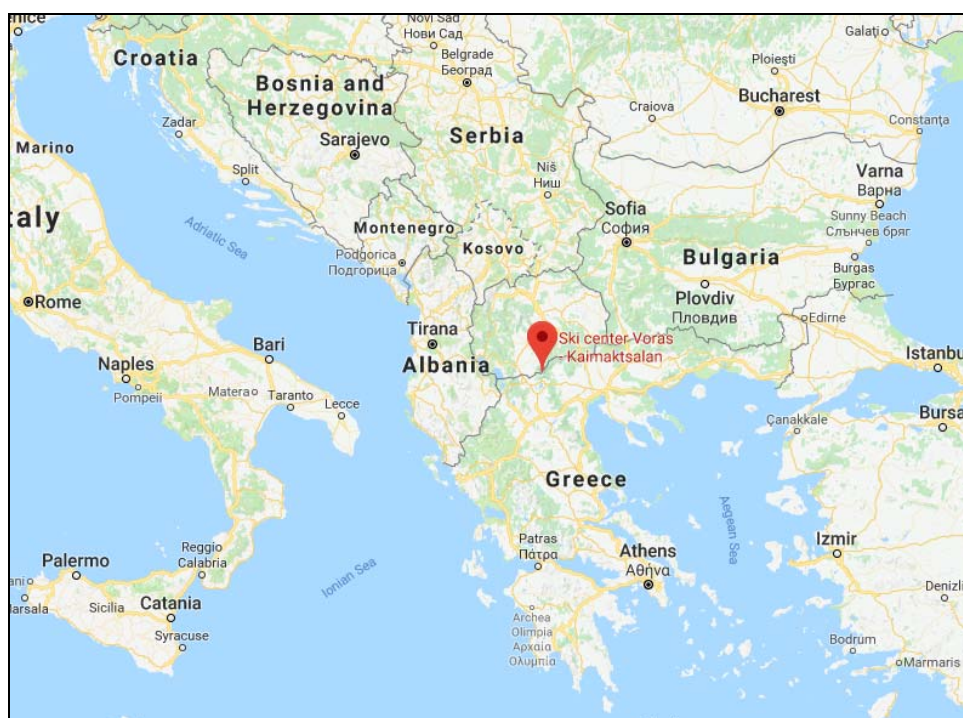


Figure 2. Map of Greece and the point of Voras ski center at Kaimaktsalan
(Source: Google maps, <https://maps.google.com/>)

Process

The questionnaires were distributed at Kaimaktsalan ski center in Northern Greece with the physical presence of the researchers at regular intervals from January until the end of March 2013. Kaimaktsalan ski center and Voras mountain is located nearby Thessaloniki, second largest city in Greece. Voras Mountain is located at the borders with F.Y.R.O.M. and its crest-ridge is the limit line of the two countries. It is the third highest mountain in Greece after Olympus (2917 m.) and Smolikas (2637 m.), with an altitude of 2524 m, on the peak of which stands Kaimaktsalan Ski Center

(Figure 1). The view from the mountain is amazing, since one can see as far as Thermaikos Gulf, the peak of Olympus mountain and, of course, the 3-5 Pigadia Ski Center in Naoussa, which is across the peak (Figure 2). Thus, it was decided to conduct a research at the ski center of Kaimaktsalan. Initially 300 questionnaires were distributed, but 274 were fully completed and were used for this research.

Statistical Analysis.

Finally, the statistical analysis was performed by using the statistic procedures of descriptive statistics, factor analysis, Cronbach's reliability test, t-test for independent samples and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Two factor analyses were implemented to thirty-four (34) tourists' behavior questions and to twenty-two (22) tourists' needs questions by implementing the principal component analysis and the varimax rotation. The number of factors was determined by using the criterion of eigenvalues, which should have been greater than one (>1). Also, the maximum iterations number of convergence should have been equal to .40. Thus, eight factors were revealed for the tourists' behavior scale: active sport tourist, knowledge tourist, explorer, high class tourist, sun lover, independent mass tourist, organized mass tourist and escapist. On the other hand, five factors were extracted for the need's scale: physiological needs and self-esteem, love and belongingness, safety and security needs, self-actualization, the external environment. Maslow (1970) was the first researcher who provided the same hierarchy of needs that influence behavior. The reliability analysis was made by utilizing Cronbach's a methodology. The tourists' behavior scale presented reliable scores (table 1).

Table 1. Reliability Test – Tourist Roles (behavior)

| Tourist Roles | Cronbach's alpha |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Active Sport Tourist | 0,853 |
| Knowledge Tourist | 0,844 |
| Explorer | 0,748 |
| High Class Tourist | 0,769 |
| Sun Lover | 0,682 |
| Independent Mass Tourist | 0,700 |
| Organized Mass Tourist | 0,619 |
| Escapist | (1 question) |

Also, for the tourists' needs scale the reliability analysis was performed by utilizing Cronbach's a methodology. The scale presented again reliable scores (table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Test – Human needs

| Human Needs | Cronbach's alpha |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Physiological needs and self-esteem | 0,871 |
| Love and belongingness | 0,866 |
| Safety and security needs | 0,748 |
| Self-actualization | 0,698 |
| The External Environment | 0,601 |

A further investigation of the factors was conducted by using t-test for independent samples and one-way analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA). The analysis revealed that gender is a catalytic variable at the role of organized mass tourist (table 3).

Table 3. T-test between tourist roles (behavior) and gender

| Tourist roles (gender) | F levene | P – levene* | t statistic | P* | Mean Difference |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Active Sport Tourist | 1,395 | 0,242 | 1,363 | 0,177 | 0,270 |
| Knowledge Tourist | 9,056 | 0,004 | 1,591 | 0,119 | 0,386 |
| Explorer | 3,321 | 0,073 | 0,628 | 0,532 | 0,147 |
| High Class Tourist | 1,671 | 0,200 | 1,684 | 0,097 | 0,372 |
| Sun Lover | 0,112 | 0,739 | 0,440 | 0,661 | 0,083 |
| Independent Mass Tourist | 1,144 | 0,289 | 1,223 | 0,226 | 0,252 |
| Organized Mass Tourist | 1,352 | 0,249 | -2,057 | 0,043 | -0,401 |
| Escapist | 2,662 | 0,107 | 0,512 | 0,610 | 0,163 |

*95% confidence interval

Another important variable seems to be the education level. Especially, for the category of explorer and the category of organized mass tourist (table 4).

Table 4. ANOVA between tourist roles (behavior) and education levels

| Tourist roles (education) | F-Value | Probability (P)* |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Active Sport Tourist | 1,057 | 0,398 |
| Knowledge Tourist | 1,379 | 0,237 |
| Explorer | 3,089 | 0,010 |
| High Class Tourist | 0,441 | 0,849 |
| Sun Lover | 1,255 | 0,291 |
| Independent Mass Tourist | 1,918 | 0,092 |
| Organized Mass Tourist | 2,536 | 0,029 |
| Escapist | 1,016 | 0,423 |

*95% confidence interval

Moreover, the analysis of variance showed that tourists with different occupations also have different behavior (table 5).

Table 5. ANOVA between tourist roles (behavior) and occupation

| Tourist roles (occupation) | F-Value | Probability (P)* |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Active Sport Tourist | 0,639 | 0,671 |
| Knowledge Tourist | 1,063 | 0,389 |
| Explorer | 0,318 | 0,901 |
| High Class Tourist | 0,307 | 0,907 |
| Sun Lover | 0,599 | 0,701 |
| Independent Mass Tourist | 2,390 | 0,047 |
| Organized Mass Tourist | 2,677 | 0,029 |
| Escapist | 0,416 | 0,836 |

*95% confidence interval

In addition, there are no differences between tourist roles and age variable and the variable income is affecting only the role of explorer tourist (table 6).

Table 6. ANOVA between tourist roles (behavior) and income

| Tourist roles (income) | F-Value | Probability (P)* |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Active Sport Tourist | 1,479 | 0,235 |
| Knowledge Tourist | 2,712 | 0,074 |
| Explorer | 5,841 | 0,005 |
| High Class Tourist | 1,641 | 0,202 |
| Sun Lover | 0,900 | 0,411 |
| Independent Mass Tourist | 0,570 | 0,568 |
| Organized Mass Tourist | 0,352 | 0,705 |
| Escapist | 0,049 | 0,952 |

*95% confidence interval

The same variables were examined with human needs factors. Gender didn't affect them, but education levels presented many differences at four of the five human needs. Specifically, tourists with a master degree have different needs than tourists with lower education levels/bachelor degree (table 7).

Table 7. ANOVA between human needs and education levels

| Needs (education) | F-Value | Probability (P)* |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Physiological needs and self-esteem | 0,798 | 0,575 |
| Love and belongingness | 2,473 | 0,033 |
| Safety and security needs | 2,275 | 0,047 |
| Self-actualization | 3,675 | 0,003 |
| The External Environment | 3,012 | 0,012 |

*95% confidence interval

Also, the findings show that tourists with different occupation have only different safety and security needs (table 8).

Table 8. ANOVA between human needs and occupation levels

| Needs (occupation) | F-value | Probability (P)* |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Physiological needs and self-esteem | 1,822 | 0,121 |
| Love and belongingness | 1,413 | 0,232 |
| Safety and security needs | 2,517 | 0,038 |
| Self-actualization | 1,225 | 0,308 |
| The External Environment | 1,627 | 0,166 |

*95% confidence interval

Also, it was discovered that the variable age presented many differences compared to human needs factors (table 9).

Table 9. ANOVA between human needs and age

| Needs (age) | F-value | Probability (P)* |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Physiological needs and self-esteem | 1,395 | 0,255 |
| Love and belongingness | 8,485 | 0,001 |
| Safety and security needs | 0,841 | 0,436 |
| Self-actualization | 3,665 | 0,031 |
| The External Environment | 4,604 | 0,013 |

*95% confidence interval

Finally, tourists with different family income have different safety and security needs (table 10).

Table 10. ANOVA between human needs and income

| Needs (income) | F-value | Probability (P)* |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Physiological needs and self-esteem | 0,428 | 0,654 |
| Love and belongingness | 1,536 | 0,223 |
| Safety and security needs | 3,972 | 0,023 |
| Self-actualization | 2,466 | 0,093 |
| The External Environment | 2,889 | 0,063 |

*95% confidence interval

The main findings of the research indicated that 51.43% of the participants claimed that they sometimes feel satisfied with the winter tourism activities in general. Also, the 42.86% of the participants mentioned that they are partially attracted by the winter sports activities that they do at the ski center. 65.71% of the tourists claim that they are very satisfied with their physical and psychological needs during their winter tourism vacations. The profile of winter sport tourists in Kaimaktsalan ski center is mainly women

(61.43%), single (37.14%), 17-39 years-old (80%), university graduates (44.29%), with full-time occupation (45.71%) and with a family income of 20.000-60.000 euro (48.57%).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Most winter tourists, are attracted by ski and snowboard activities. Furthermore, 2/3 of winter tourists claim that they excessively satisfy their physical and psychological needs. In other words, the ski center of Kaimaktsalan is selected by the winter tourists in order to rest and escape from their daily routine. The selection of ski and snowboarding activities supports that idea. People desire to increase their adrenaline level to feel free and revitalized, facts that are in line with several researches (Goulimaris et al., 2014; Kontogianni et al., 2014). Most winter tourists in Voras ski center came from Greece and the Balkans. It is reasonable because the ski center is located in Northern Greece near F.Y.R.O.M., Romania and Bulgaria, but there seems to be an important absence of winter tourists who come from other locations worldwide and visit Greece in winter. It may occur because the quality standards in Kaimaktsalan ski center are not aligned with the quality standards of ski centers in Central Europe. Thus, the European winter tourists do not want to visit Kaimaktsalan ski center. On the other hand, there is not instant access from Europe to Kaimaktsalan. The international airport "Macedonia" of Thessaloniki enables access from Europe, but it is not enough, because there is a remaining route of 124km to the ski center, which is not easy to be covered. Place has been persistently important in thinking about leisure/tourism. In considering popular practice and lay knowledge, the processes of leisure and tourism merge. Leisure/ tourism are encounters in different ways: with other people, with material space, with one's imagination, ideas, metaphors of place, of leisure and tourism, of nature and of the city. These encounters may be with memory and people and places in other parts of one's life. To focus on encounters makes use of 'non-representational theory' (Thrift, 1997) and this provides the focus of interest that this paper mobilizes towards an animation of leisure/tourism.

The demographic characteristics showed that families with low and medium income prefer Voras ski center in Greece as vacation destination. Most tourists have full time job/businesspersons. Gender was not different between its categories and especially women have a good representative percentage. Age had big percentages at the category 17-39, but ages of 40-59 and 60-over recorded small percentages. Finally, education levels revealed supremacy of University graduates. This is in accordance to Standeven & De Knop (1999), who came up with the same result, except the high income level at this results. But the difference in income may raise by the economic crisis in Greece and the big percentage of Greek tourists at this ski center. According to the research objectives, the findings indicate that male and female respondents present similar needs but they have differences in terms of the behavior of the organized mass tourist. Differences were also found regarding education levels and occupation. Those findings are similar with the findings from the researches of Gibson et al., (2002) and Yfantidou et al., (2008). However, the fact that the current research is focused on an area where there are not any other investigations, makes those findings unique.

This research is a case study of Kaimaktsalan ski center. Future research should explore the conditions of other ski centers in Macedonia or Greece to discover more accurate evidences for ski centers in Greece. Also, a research comparison should be performed across Europe in order to discover any similarities or differences with other ski centers. Gios et al., (2006), discuss that analytical studies show notable differences between different areas in terms of total number of visitors or in relation to the willingness to pay for the fruition of the area. The area of Voras mountain can be representative for many mountain areas. In conclusion, generally, the whole area has an

environmental wealth which is not utilized, or is utilized only minimally, for the benefit of the local population. As has already been observed, succeeding in modifying this situation is fundamental for the future development of this kind of areas.

The interpretation of the results shows that there are significant differences to some tourist roles and needs due to demographic characteristics and they will be presented below. Specifically, more women select to travel to ski centers with organized groups. The explorers and the organized tourists are mainly people with high educational level and explorers have also medium income. Furthermore, independent and organized mass tourists are in the majority students or unemployed or household keepers. As far as needs, all needs except physiological needs and self-esteem are influenced by educational level, specifically, tourists with high educational level showed that they are satisfied by these needs at this point in their life (vacations to ski center). Safety and security needs are covered by tourists who have full time occupation or they are retired, in addition to unemployed tourists. The same needs of safety are more satisfied by young and older people, in addition to middle age who face up the crisis in their family life. This is with accordance to medium income tourists who pointed more positive answers to safety than low income tourists. Miragaia and Martins (2015), suggest that organizational decision makers identify the attributes valued by consumers at this destination type and take this information into account so as to raise tourists' satisfaction levels. However, maintaining this consistently over time requires constantly monitoring whether the consumer profile is changing or not. In addition, holding and running entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives, able to bring continuous improvements to the services provided without ignoring the characteristics of the destination's differentiating resources, would boost the resort's respective level of competitiveness.

Moreover, the fact that is very worrying is that the local economy, where the ski center is located, is supported by Greek and Balkan tourists, whose income is limited especially this period of economic crisis. Tourism is of great economic importance and significance for the European East Alpine regions. But to an increasing degree, low productivity resulting from the small business structure of the Alpine region weakens the economic and social leadership of tourism. In the last few decades overcoming these difficulties often included substantial supporting of institutionalized tourism organizations by tourism policy, with the intention to bundle forces and to achieve growing global competition (Pechlaner & Tschurtschenthaler, 2003). The experience thus far with tourism development cautions that while tourism can be a powerful agent for local economic prosperity, it is a significant challenge to ensure that it fosters the kind of environmentally and culturally sensitive development (Stevens, 2003).

In addition, it is important to mention that 66% of the participants declare that they do not desire to revisit the ski center of Kaimaktsalan. Operators of recreational ski resorts continue to face challenges in developing more loyal skiers. It has been reported that many skiers either drop out of the activity or they have low frequency of participation (Alexandris et al., 2017). Thus, future research should explore this condition further in order to discover the reasons. Hence, it is crucial to take these results into account to employ the right measures to increase customer satisfaction. An undifferentiated assessment of satisfaction drivers may hide the true importance of the single satisfaction dimensions and may mislead managers in setting the right priorities. Thus, managers of ski resorts are advised to first discover the structure and segments of their clientele, and then analyze their satisfaction surveys by considering the moderating effects of lifestyles, spending levels and skiers' skills. By setting target groups, specific improvements in relation to the right satisfaction dimensions in each segment can be realized. Also, overall satisfaction and thereby loyalty can be increased. An analysis of this type provides

managers with clear advice about where improvements necessary and meaningful (Matzler et al., 2007). It is important for policy-makers and local communities to improve the quality of tourist experience (Wang et al., 2016). Voras ski center should successfully provide “tourism products” that cover all tourist roles.

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