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Perceived Constraints on Recreational Skiing Participation: Differences in the among Demographic Groups and Groups with Different Participation Rates

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Introduction

During the last few decades, skiing became a popular leisure activity in Greece. There are currently nineteen (19) skiing resorts, which offer a variety of snow related services and activities, attracting more than 500.000 visitors every year (Hudson & Cross, 2004). In the last few years, there has been an increase of interest among researchers on issues related to recreational skiing participation. In an effort to propose strategies for increasing visitors' frequency rates and loyalty levels, it has been proposed that leisure constraint research and the hierarchical model (Crawford et al., 1991) can contribute towards this direction. Furthermore, a number of studies have examined variations in the perception of leisure constraints among and between different demographic groups and groups with different participation rates (Kouthouris, 2005; Alexandris and et., 2002). While these differences have been reported in various leisure activities (e.g., Alexandris and Carroll, 1997a; 1997b; 1999), they have not been investigated in the context of recreational skiing participation. The presented study aimed to investigate constraints on recreational skiing participation, and examine if there are any differences in the perceptions of constraints among different demographic groups and groups with difference participation rates.

Method

Three hundred and one (N=301) recreational Greek skiers (65.1% males and 34.9% females) participated in the study, which was conducted in a popular ski resort of North Greece. An adjusted version of Alexandris and Carroll (1997a) leisure constraint scale was used. Demographic and frequency participation rates questions were also included in the questionnaire.

Results

The results indicated that 41% of the individuals were classified as frequent skiers, 18% as infrequent, and 38% just participated a couple of times per year. In terms of the mean scores in the leisure constraint dimensions, financial / accessibility and lack of time had the highest mean scores (3.2 and 3.1, respectively). The reliability analysis revealed acceptable values of alpha for all the scales ($>.70$). The results revealed statistical significant differences: a) between males and females in the individual / psychological ($t=2.67$, $p<.01$) and lack of time ($t=-2.17$, $p<.05$) dimensions; b) among education groups in the lack of interest ($F=2.87$, $p<.05$) dimension. Post-hoc analysis indicated that more educated individuals have lower scores than the less educated ones and c) among groups with different participation levels in all the constraint dimensions ($p<.001$).

Discussion

The high scores in the financial /accessibility and lack of time dimensions relate to the context of the study and the particular requirements of the activity. The results about the gender differences support studies conducted in other leisure settings (e.g., Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Alexandris and Carroll 1997b). Furthermore, the results related to the negative relationship between education and perception of individual / psychological constraints. Finally, the differences in the perception of leisure constraints among different frequency of participation groups are in line with the hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Crawford et al., 1991). These results show the value of leisure constraint research in developing segmentation strategies and targeting current skiers and perspective ones for promoting the activity.

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