

## MARKETING POLICIES THROUGH THE INTERNET: THE CASE OF SKIING CENTERS IN GREECE

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**Abstract:** *Lately, Internet constitutes a major tool for transactions in every aspect and supports innovative marketing policies. Broadband Internet has become “the key to success” for businesses, as it offers various advantages and benefits through Internet marketing (e-marketing) policies. In Greece, mountainous areas are usually covered with snow during winter months; so, skiing centers have become an important asset for winter tourism. The Internet evolution and the development of network infrastructure enhance marketing policies for winter tourism activities. This paper studies the use of marketing policies in Greek skiing centers through the Internet, such as promotional activities, website interactivity, accommodation & entertainment information, online weather forecast, guest book, etc Therefore, the paper aims to optimize and evaluate skiing centers in Greece, qualitatively and quantitatively according to e-marketing policies used as criteria, based on the multicriteria method of PROMETHEE II and further to classify them in groups. Finally we identify and describe the optimum group of skiing centers to be used as a model with enhanced customer communication services.*

**Keywords:** *marketing, marketing policy, internet, skiing centers, multicriteria analysis, Promethee II.*

**JEL Classification Codes:** C65, M31, O32

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer huge opportunities for all to progress and benefit and new prospects exist for economic growth, better service delivery, social and cultural advances (Andreopoulou et al, 2007). ICTs in every human activity have achieved a great acceptance during the last decades, mostly due to the easy release of essential social services. ICTs, the so-called new technologies, can effectively support in the improvement of rendered services to the public, eliminate bureaucracy and increase productivity (Andreopoulou, 2011). ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of digital data (Tutor2u, 2011). Companies and individuals have become more familiar to do business as and when they like; therefore, conventional companies in every area of interest are increasingly searching for internet-enabling their products and services (Krueger & Swatman, 2004). New ICTs have disrupted many traditional forms of community but enabled the emergence of new ones (Connery & Hasan, 2005). It has to be stressed that people usually move between not using ICT and using ICT during their life depending on the variations between technologies (Selwyn, 2003). The complexities and challenges involved in IT implementation are well documented but IT application processes are difficult to understand and to manage, with several barriers that hinder the achievement of the intended organizational impacts (Nilsson, 2007). In business, ICT is often categorized into two broad type of product (Tutor2u, 2011): *the traditional computer-based technologies*, things somebody can typically do on a personal computer or using computers at home or at work and *the more recent, and fast-growing range of digital communication technologies*, which allow people and organizations to communicate and share information digitally through the internet.

Enterprises aim at their participation in the internet society since the benefits are high and electronic systems are ready to serve clients all over the world 24 hours per day 7 days a week (Andreopoulou, 2008) when the cost keeps decreasing. The internet has become a major resource in modern business and many businesses are creating a web presence (Calitz & Scheepers, 2002) and enable transactions in an e-environment, sharing information with whoever interested (Tsekouropoulos et al, 2008). They use the internet not only for retrieving information and marketing but also for the enhancement of their communication with business-partners and clients (Tsekouropoulos et al, 2005). Enterprises find in the internet a mean to reduce customer-service costs, to further sustain customer relationships, to extend marketing messages personally and thus enable mass customization (Johnson, 2002). E-marketing can be defined as the use of Internet and related digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives and support the modern marketing concept (Eszes, 2010).

E-marketing gives business of any size access to the mass market at an affordable price and allows truly personalized marketing. Specific benefits of e-marketing include (Department of Trade and Industry of United Kingdom, 2004; The National B2B Centre, 2011):

- *Global reach*. A website allows finding new markets and trading globally for only a small investment.
- *Lower cost*. A properly planned and effectively targeted e-marketing campaign can reach the right customers at a much lower cost than traditional marketing methods.
- *Trackable, measurable results*. Web-analytics and other online metric tools make it easier to establish how effective the campaign has been. Detailed information can be obtained about how customers use the website or respond to the advertising.
- *24-Hour marketing*. With a website the customers can find out about the products even if the office is closed.
- *Shorter lead times*. If there is a website or an e-mail template, the reaction to events will be more quickly, giving a much more contemporary feel.

- *A level playing field.* With a well-designed website, the enterprise could look like professional and credible as the larger competitors.
- *Personalization.* If the customer database is linked to the website, then whenever someone visits the site, can be greeted with targeted offers. DataBase Management System (DBMS) is a software package that allows data to be effectively stored, retrieved and manipulated (Andreopoulou et al, 2011).
- *Openness.* By having a social media presence and managing it carefully, the entrepreneur can built customer loyalty and create a reputation for being easy to engage with.
- *Social currency.* E-marketing lets the entrepreneur create engaging campaigns using different types of rich media. On the internet these campaigns can gain social currency-being passed from user to user and becoming viral.
- *Improved conversion rates.* If the enterprise has a website, then the customers are only ever a few clicks away from completing a purchase. Unlike other media which require people to get up and make o phone call, or go to a shop, e-marketing can be seamless and immediate.

Together, all of these aspects of e-marketing have the potential to add up to more sales. One of the biggest forces changing business is the Internet (Mc-Graw Hill Higher Education, 2008). Internet is certainly a means of communication, which can convey messages to public, but there is a particularity as a means of advertising since it also acts as a means of interaction (Vlachopoulou, 2007). E-marketing policies enable people to communicate in new ways, provide new business models, permit businesses to operate more efficiently and take advantage of the new global network economy. E-business expresses the continuous improvement of the services of an enterprise through digital technology. It also includes all the marketing policies, which take place in an enterprise (Tsekouropoulos, 2009) such as: e-marketing, Business intelligence, Customer Relationship Management, Supply chain Management, Enterprise Resource Planning. Marketing through corporate websites must be innovative, add value, and provide useful information.

It is not only usability that affects a website's appeal and number of visits. Studies have identified a number of specific site policies (actual or perceived) that impact website appeal. Among these policies are (Blake et al, 2005):

- *Security.* Secure communications are an important prerequisite of e-commerce transactions and are required for confidential electronic communications (Masoud et al., 2009).
- *Vividness and its correlated riskiness*
- *Approval by referrers* (like family or friends)
- *Policies organization*
- *Quality of content.* Perceived quality and flow state are major determinants of satisfaction and positive emoticons (Cruz et al., 2010).
- *Price*
- *Recognisability and/or desirability of brand*
- *Time delay/download speed*

Similarly, the promotional content is the most highly valued website feature (Burgess et al, 2005). Portals can extend their reach to potential customers worldwide (Chan & Chung, 2002), through the use of the Internet as a marketing tool. Moreover, if the company primarily has other companies as customers, it is more likely to use an e-business framework (Nurmilaakso, 2009).

### **1.1 Skiing centers in the internet**

E-services should be used as an important component in achieving sustainable development in mountainous areas and should be encouraged (EU, 2007). Greece is a mountainous country with intense contrasts and so the snow coverage in mountainous areas is a

usual phenomenon. The above climate circumstances provide to people the ability to make winter sports such as ice skating, snowboarding, ski mountaineering. The ability for ice skating that offers the snow, contributes to the evolution of the mountainous tourism (Pavlidis, 2007). Tourism is one of the main industries in Greece that stimulates economic development in industries from hospitality, transport, construction and retail, to small businesses such as restaurants, bars and tourism agents (Tsiotsou, 2006).

The sport of skiing is expected to display great development in the future in Greece because more and more locals prefer to spend their weekends or winter vacations in skiing centers located in the country, and so become the strongest tool for its evolution. The sport industry is unique because it appeals to a variety of people for many different reasons. The core benefits to customers who purchase sport products include entertainment, health, and achievement (Mullin et al, 2000). Already by 1970, the development of the Hellenic Ice Sports, with the ski-resort construction, was rapid (Pavlidis, 2007). Some places have become very popular and attract tourists in high number during winter especially at weekends. Because winter tourism is a very important sector in Greece and skiing centers are rapidly growing, it is imperative to study and understand the positive impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and e-business solutions on the optimization of the business processes.

E-business in skiing centers focuses on e-marketing for a destination (critical business function), marketplace for e-commerce (critical business function) and electronic ticketing (in implementation stage) (E-business w@tch, 2005)<sup>1</sup>. Critical policies are called the business functions that are most sensitive to downtime, fulfill legal or financial obligations to maintain cash flow, play a key role in maintaining the business market share/reputation and safeguard an irreplaceable asset (Prepare my business, 2010). E-business implementation makes it easier for the individual enterprise to reach customers and vice versa for the customer to understand the possibilities provided by the area (E-business w@tch, 2003). The success stems from a well-designed website that relies on the right online tools to reach and resonate with a global customer base (Payne, 2008). The goal is to provide an attractive, interactive and integrated service that meets the requirements and expectations of various user groups. This goal includes ensuring access to current information without delays and, further, controlling access to information and implementing a charging mechanism (Ernie & Norrie, 1997). Skiing center corporate websites and the marketing policies included, play an important role in the successful development of skiing centers.

This paper studies the use of marketing policies in Greek skiing centers through the Internet, such as promotional activities, website interactivity, accommodation and entertainment information, online weather forecast, guest book, etc Therefore, the paper aims to optimize and evaluate skiing centers in Greece, qualitatively and quantitatively according to e-marketing policies used as criteria, based on the multicriteria method of PROMETHEE II and further to classify them in groups. Finally we identify and describe the optimum group of skiing centers to be used as a model with enhanced customer communication policies.

## **2. METHODOLOGY AND VALIDATION**

The websites of skiing centers that were used for the research were collected from the Greek Internet with the use of proper search engines.

Initially, qualitative analysis was performed in order to examine the type of common e-marketing criteria, representing marketing policies, found in these skiing centers websites; then a quantitative analysis was carried out, in order to examine the presence or absence of these criteria/characteristics.

Various e-marketing policies were introduced in the retrieved websites and 5 different criteria were identified and introduced in each website. Each e-marketing policy constitutes a criteria/characteristic and it is finally attributed in a variable  $Z_i$  (Table 1). Additionally, a 2-dimensional table was developed and was used in order to examine the existence of the criteria and evaluate the policies in the websites. For that purpose the values were attributed to variables  $Z_1$  to  $Z_5$ , respectively.

**Table 1. Variables attributed to e-marketing criteria, representing marketing policies**

Variable	E-marketing policies to become criteria achieved by the ski centers website
$Z_1$	Capacity of information provision to online visitors (weather forecast, accommodation, entertainment)
$Z_2$	Interactivity and Online communication
$Z_3$	Provision of advertising other companies through the website
$Z_4$	Autonomous presence within the internet
$Z_5$	Promotional activities, sales discount e.t.c.

Variable  $Z_1$  refers to the capacity of information provision to the online visitors. The website provides up-to-date detailed local and theme based information, destination maps, generation of weather forecast warnings, enhanced navigational experience through web camera, snow cover maps and statistical summaries of snow. This is a comfortable marketing policy for the guest and a potential source of additional revenues for the skiing centers (E-business w@tch, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

Variable  $Z_2$  represents the interactivity marketing policy where the skiing center website provides online reservation functionalities, online booking system for accommodations, packages offered online, online rental of sports equipment, e-ticketing service and e-mail marketing. Also, the potential customers are able to chat with the employees of the skiing center for further information or with each other in a virtual community (social media). Social media is playing a major role in accelerating the decision cycle of consumers who patronize skiing centers (Levins, 2009). The type of communication can be either synchronous or asynchronous. In synchronous communications all participants are online at the same time (e.g. IRC), while asynchronous communications occurs with time constraints (e.g. e-mail) (Wikipedia, 2011). E-mail marketing is allowing the ski center to create the equivalent of impulse shopping at the check-out stand. The addition of direct mail to the marketing mix seems like a natural, given the resorts' mostly young and technology savvy audience. The resort solidifies its relationships by taking guests to a conversational, personal level online. The e-mail system adds the benefit of real-time information to subscribers, boosting their usage and frequency (D'Antonio, 2000).

Variable  $Z_3$  stands for the policy of advertisement for other local enterprises, such as restaurants, hotels, ski-equipment rentals, travel agency, etc.

The marketing policy of autonomous internet presence ( $Z_4$ ) might include: access to the internet, e-mail address, website, listings in directories/search engines and other communication tools (Media College, 2010). The skiing centers that don't have an autonomous internet presence can be found through websites with general information about the skiing centers in Greece.

Finally, variable  $Z_5$  represents the marketing policy to enable sales discounts such as online exclusive coupons. It also represents the existence of other promotional activities. Sending last-minute e-mail invitations will contribute to the dramatic increase in the frequency of guest visits to the resort.

Whenever a criterion was achieved for a website the value 1 was attributed to the respective variable aiming at justifying the relative policy within the evaluation of the website. The findings were further analysed the achievement of each e-marketing policy/criteria in the sample websites.

The total amount of e-marketing criteria achieved in each website was also studied. For each skiing centre website, the total number of achieved criteria is attributed to a new variable, named t. Variable t presents the sum of e-marketing policies achieved, therefore takes a value between 1 and 5.

Then, the total ranking of the websites was studied. The method that was used for the total ranking was the multicriteria analysis named PROMETHEE II. That method applies a linear form of service in this particular case, using the e-marketing policies of the websites identified as criteria. The PROMETHEE II method is part of the outranking relations theory (Brans & Vincke, 1985; Brans et al, 1986; Siskos & Zopounidis, 1987; Brans et al, 1987; Brans et al, 1998; Zopounidis, 2001). The PROMETHEE II method for multi criteria analysis uses six types of general criteria with the corresponding criteria services, in order to determine the superiority (outranking) between two alternative solutions.

In this specific case, the aim was to determine the superiority of one website over another website. The general level test criterion was selected for this project, corresponding to a criterion service, which has an interval region for the determination of superiority (Brans & Vincke, 1985; Roy, 1991). The skiing centers websites were examined in pairs as alternative solutions ( $k_i, k_j$ ) with  $i=1,2,\dots,23$  and  $j=1,2,\dots,23$  as to their supremacy, i.e. which of the two websites excelled based on the criteria used.

The service  $H(d)$ , which was used to express superiority, was the following (1):

$$H(d) = \begin{cases} P(v_i, v_j), \text{ outranking of website } v_i, & \text{if } d \geq 0 \\ P(v_j, v_i), \text{ outranking of website } v_j, & \text{if } d < 0 \end{cases}$$

Where  $P(v_i, v_j)$ ,  $P(v_j, v_i)$  are the services of preference, and  $d$  is the difference between the values of each pair of websites ( $v_i, v_j$ ), for the criterion under evaluation. When we examined which of the two websites ( $v_i, v_j$ ) is superior, the superiority service  $H(d)$  was applied according to the value  $d$  (positive or negative) for each criterion.

In this study, variables  $Z_1, \dots, Z_5$  were used, which are the criteria described in Table 1. The variables are unambiguous and are marked with either 0 or 1. For this reason, the service used is of linear form  $\rho=1$ .

The multicriteria indicator of preference  $\Pi(v_i, v_j)$  which is a weighted mean of the preference services  $P(v_i, v_j)$  with weights  $w_i$ , express the superiority of website  $v_i$  against website  $v_j$  after all the criteria have been tested.

The values of  $\Pi(v_i, v_j)$  are calculated using the following equation (Brans et al, 1986):

$$\Pi(v_i, v_j) = \frac{\sum_{t=1}^k W_t \cdot P_t(v_i, v_j)}{\sum_{t=1}^k W_t} \quad (2)$$

We receive 50 scenarios of weights (one scenario of weights  $w_i$  corresponds to all criteria) and for each scenario of weights we receive 10 scenarios on the standard deviation for every criterion. In total, we have 500 different net flow values for each website of skiing centers. We use the average of these 500 values as the final net flow value for each skiing center website.

$K$  is defined as the number of criteria and  $P_t(v_i, v_j)$  the preference services for the  $k$  criteria. The multicriteria preference indicator  $\Pi(v_i, v_j)$  takes values between 0 and 1. When two websites

$(v_i, v_j)$  are compared, one is assigned two flow values: outgoing flow and incoming flow. The outgoing flow is calculated by the following equation (Baourakis et al, 2001):

$$\Phi^+(v_i) = \sum_{v_j \in A} \Pi(v_i, v_j) \quad (3)$$

In both cases, A is defined as the number of alternative solutions for websites  $v_j$ . The outgoing flow expresses the total superiority of website  $v_i$  against all other websites  $v_j$  for all criteria. The incoming flow is determined by the following equation (Baourakis et al, 2001):

$$\Phi^-(v_i) = \sum_{v_j \in A} \Pi(v_i, v_j) \quad (4)$$

The incoming flow expresses the total superiority of all other websites  $v_i$  against website  $v_j$  for all criteria. The net flow for each website  $v_i$  is estimated by the following formula:

$$\Phi(v_i) = \Phi^+(v_i) - \Phi^-(v_i) \quad (5)$$

The net flow is the final number that is used for the comparison between the websites in order to obtain the ranking. The ten values (scenarios) range between 0.25s and 2.5s with step 0.25s, where s is the standard deviation of all differences d for each criterion. In total, we take 500 net flow values for each website and find the website's average value. Each website with a higher net flow is considered superior in the final ranking. The total ranking of SC is presented in Table 2.

The PROMETHEE II methodology was selected in order to perform evaluation and ranking tasks, for the following reasons: a) because the estimated relation of superiority (of one website over another) is less sensitive in small changes and that offers an easier analysis and discussion of the results (Zopounidis, 2001), b) the use of the superiority relation in the PROMETHEE method is applied when the alternative solutions (websites) have to be ranked from the best to the worst (Zopounidis, 2001), and c) the procedure of assessing and ranking complicated cases of websites is proper for the application of the above methodology in the sense that it is closer to reality (Zopounidis, 2001). In fact, there exist two types of the PROMETHEE methodology, the PROMETHEE I that ranks partially and also, the PROMETHEE II, which performs a full and complete ranking, based on all of the input data. The PROMETHEE II methodology was applied in this project because an overall ranking was required. It is also important that our variables concern qualitative data and PROMETHEE II methodology can successfully deal with that prerequisite (Koutroumanidis et.al, 2004). Moreover, regarding the application of PROMETHEE II in the field of agriculture, food and environment, there are recent research papers in Greece where the method is successfully applied (Koutroumanidis, et.al, 2002; Polyzos & Arabatzis, 2006, Tsekouropoulos et.al., 2011).

The PROMETHEE methodology fits better to the targets of the project even if it is compared to other well-established methods. For example the ELECTRE methods are methods of superiority that use the rule of majority inside a relation of superiority. The target in the ELECTRE is to determine an alternative website, which is relatively "good", based on a majority of criteria without been too "bad" according to the rest of the criteria (Koutroumanidis et al, 2004). Nevertheless this is not the objective of this project where the objective is the total evaluation of the websites. The AHP method is also well-known and broadly applied (Koutroumanidis, et al, 2004). But, according to Alphonse (1997) the ability of the AHP to analyze different decision factors without the need for a common numerate, other than the decision maker's assessments, makes it one of the favorable multicriteria decision support tools when dealing with complex socioeconomic problems in developing countries.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research on the Internet resulted in the retrieve of 23 websites concerning skiing centers in Greece that have an internet presence. The achievement of each one of the 5 e-marketing policies representing criteria, expressed in variables  $Z_1$  to  $Z_5$  is presented in Figure 1.

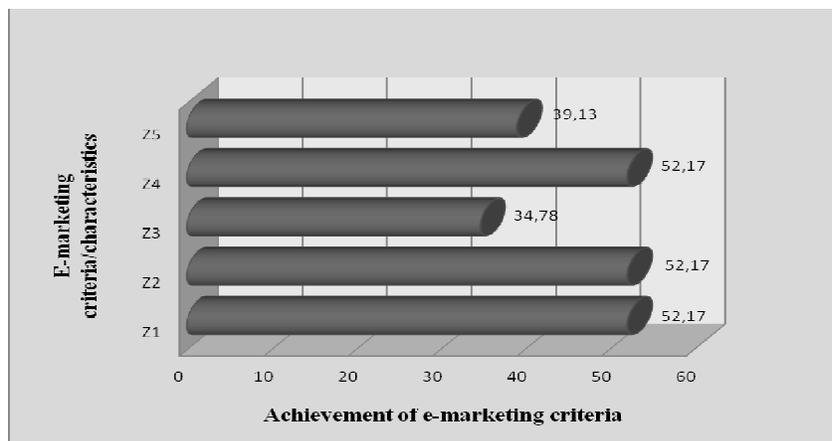


Figure 1. Achievement of e-marketing criteria about the skiing centers

Regarding the capacity of rich information provision to the online visitors of the skiing centers websites ( $Z_1$ ) as a marketing policy, 52.17% of them fulfill that feature. Variable  $Z_2$  that represents the e-marketing policy where the customers are able to interact and also chat for further information is found in 52.17% of the skiing centers. Third person advertisement through the website ( $Z_3$ ) is provided in 34.78% of the skiing centers. In half of the skiing centers websites, there is an autonomous presence within the internet ( $Z_4$ ). Finally, almost 40% of the skiing centers offer promotional activities such as sales discounts ( $Z_5$ ).

Regarding variable  $t$ , that is the sum of e-marketing criteria accomplished by skiing centers websites, they are shown in Figure 2. Only seven skiing centers of the sample accomplish all five e-marketing criteria ( $t=5$ ), 3 skiing centers accomplish four e-marketing criteria ( $t=4$ ) and 2 skiing centers of the sample three ( $t=3$ ). Finally none of the skiing centers accomplish two or one e-marketing criteria ( $t=2$ ,  $t=1$ ) while 11 skiing centers none criteria ( $t=0$ ). 44% of the websites achieve between 4 and 5 e-marketing criteria. These skiing centres websites are really in a primal stage of e-commerce adoption that ensures that the website is accessible in many ways by all users that want to visit and interact with the interface in order to simply gain information.

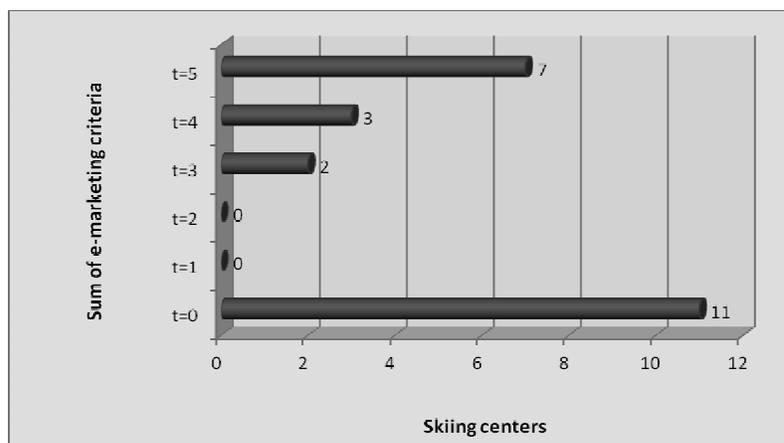


Figure 2. Sum of the e-marketing criteria accomplished by skiing centers

### 3.1 Ranking of skiing centers websites using the multicriteria method PROMETHEE II

Based on the application of the multicriteria analysis method PROMETHEE II, the total ranking of the skiing centers websites is presented in Table 2. In the same Table it is also presented the total net flow that is estimated for each website and it is used for the comparison between the websites in order to obtain the total ranking, as each website with a higher net flow is considered superior in ranking.

**Table 2. Total ranking of skiing centers, total net flows and classification in groups**

Total ranking	Skiing centers	Net flow $\phi$	Group classification
1	Falakro	+6,25	Group-1
2	Lailias	+6,25	Group-1
3	Paggaios	+5,2	Group-1
4	Kaimaktsalan	+5,04	Group-1
5	Vigla Pissoderi	+4,95	Group-1
6	Vitsi	+4,72	Group-1
7	Seli	+4,59	Group-1
8	Chriso Elafi	+4,4	Group-1
9	3-5 Pigadia	+3,65	Group-2
10	Elatochori	+2,75	Group-2
11	Vasilitsa	+2,22	Group-3
12	Olympus	+1,17	Group-3
13	Karakoli	-4,06	Group-4
14	Profitis Ilias	-4,39	Group-4
15	Pertouli	-4,49	Group-4
16	Agrafa	-4,49	Group-4
17	Pelion	-4,49	Group-4
18	Karpenisi	-4,49	Group-4
19	Parnassos (Fterolakkas)	-4,49	Group-4
20	Parnassos (Kellaria)	-4,65	Group-4
21	Parnassos (Gerondovrachos)	-5,05	Group-4
22	Kalavrita	-5,31	Group-4
23	Mainalo	-5,31	Group-4

According to these findings, the values estimated for total net flows  $\phi$  present a great spectrum of values between +6,25 to -5,31 and that indicates a great difference concerning “superiority” between the first and the last case in the ranking of the enterprises’ websites. Moreover, the total flows  $\phi$  of the skiing centers websites, as derive from the application of PROMETHEE II method, allow a further grouping of the cases and to generate 4 groups as following:

- Group-1: In that group are classified 8 websites of skiing centers that achieve 5 criteria, with high positive total flows (6,25 to 4,4) that present a “high superiority” against the rest of the cases.

- Group-2: Classified in that group are 2 websites of skiing centers that achieve 4 criteria and medium positive total flows (3,65 to 2,75) that present a “good superiority” against the rest of the cases.
- Group-3: In that group are classified 2 websites of skiing centers that achieve 3 criteria and low positive total flows (2,22 to 1,17) that present an “average lag” against the rest of the cases.
- Group-4: Classified in that group are 11 websites of skiing centers that don’t achieve any of the criteria, with low negative total flows (-4,06 to -5,31) that present a “high lag” against the rest of the cases.

In Figure 3 is presented the classification of e-shop websites in groups.

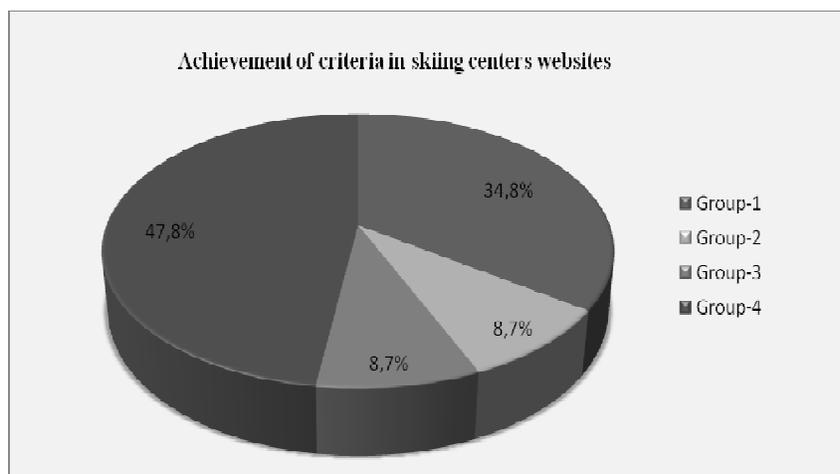


Figure 3. Achievement of criteria

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, the Internet, apart from a channel to collect information of all kind, it has also become a means of marketing and promotion and consequently, an effective business tool (Tsekouropoulos et al, 2011). The Internet has clearly transformed the lives of millions while disrupting and displacing the business models of traditional media channels around the globe (Fleishman Hillard, 2010). In the internet age, it is beneficial to set up a web platform for e-business enhancing e-marketing (E-business w@tch, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

E-marketing policies of skiing centers in Greece are still in an initial adoption level and the findings confirm that. The most developed and well organized skiing centers are these in Northern Greece which are located near popular tourist destinations. Their privileged location seems to be the motivation for adopting a competitive e-marketing strategy. The majority of the skiing centers don’t achieve any of the e-marketing policies and the internet functions. In Group-4 are classified 47,8% of the cases, which implies that these websites present a high lag and occupy a negative net total flow and they represent almost half of the skiing centers. These skiing centers should definitely evolve and include innovative e-marketing policies to improve their websites. The websites of skiing centers in group-1 should be their model in that process. The 34,8% of the skiing centers is classified in Group-1 and they appear to have a high superiority against the rest of the cases. Most of them achieve all of the criteria listed and so, they profit from the advantages of e-marketing. Additionally, skiing centers classified in groups 2 and 3 should further evolve and use as benchmark skiing centers in group-1. Many online

policies have proven successful, but there is also need for further improvement (E-business w@tch, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

It would allow businesses in the skiing community to increase their efficiency and their profits in new ways, like easily marketing their services on the internet. The potential benefits of a well-funded and properly integrated internet focused marketing strategy are enormous for the tourism industry (E-business w@tch, 2005)<sup>2</sup>. The strongest business impact of the new IT system is the cost saving (E-business w@tch, 2005)<sup>3</sup>.

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