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### EVALUATION OF WINTER TOURISM POTENTIAL IN THE PROVINCE OF BINGOL: A PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

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#### EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

Winter tourism is very important for countries in terms of spreading their tourism activities to 12 months of the year. So, development and growth of the countries which is underdeveloped economically can be provided by activating winter tourism potential of these countries. Turkey is among the countries progressing swiftly in terms of winter tourism. It has built many new mid-sized ski resorts in Turkey and these buildings have been put into service. Although there were 20 ski centers in 2000, there are more than 40 ski centers today throughout the country. However, 50 new areas suitable to winter tourism and ski tourism center have been determined.

The purpose of this study is to reveal the importance of developing winter tourism in Turkey and to evaluate the winter tourism potential in the province of Bingöl. Bingöl province, which is characterized by its wilderness, thermal springs and suitable climatic conditions in terms of winter tourism, has a major attraction for tourism. Although it has a potential to improve with various types of tourism, this study aims to evaluate the potential for winter tourism. In this regard, it has been interviewed with commercial business leaders, public servants, academics and executives of various institutions who have deep knowledge about the potential for winter tourism of Bingöl province and are affected by tourism activities in the province or direct the planning of tourism activities.

In this study, winter tourism of Bingöl province has been primarily evaluated by benefiting from the researches conducted on winter tourism, academic studies and second-hand sources which are prepared by various institutions such as reports, online data etc. Then, the interview method, which is quite common in qualitative research methods, was used to get data. After reviewing the literature by authors, five semi-structured interview questions have been prepared from the relevant literature and then these questions have been directed to stakeholders in order to be answered. It has been interviewed voluntarily with a hotel manager who works in a hotel which is operated in Bingöl, Bingöl University academics, Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate Manager, Development Agency Coordinator and manager of Haserek Ski Center. Participants who have been reviewed by authors are stated that Bingöl destination is to be able to develop in terms of winter tourism but

there are some lacks of infrastructure and superstructure and they stated also that the newly opened ski centers have not been worked at full capacity.

Results obtained from the light of evaluations by participants have been presented below;

- Bingol has a great potential for winter tourism but the next steps need to be taken to improve this potential,
- The investments were positive steps, but these investments have been seen not enough,
- Winter tourism should be enriched with other types of tourism,
- It has been concluded that local people have a ski culture in the historical context and positive behavior against tourism,
- It has been seen that there are some lacks of infrastructure and superstructure and,
- Promotion and advertising activities have emerged as required for improving winter tourism potential.