

ECONOMIC SCIENCES

TRANSNATIONAL TOURIST DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Metreveli M.

Doctor of Economics (Ph.D.)

Professor at the Georgian Technical University

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Abstract

The specifics of tourism destination management are widely covered in the scientific literature; however, the management of transnational destinations spanning multiple countries' territories has not been extensively studied to date. The practical cooperation of key stakeholders conditions the development of transnational destinations. The conditions for this are primarily created in coastal regions, against the backdrop of intensive development of integration processes. For example, the Baltic Sea region became the first macro-region of the European Union to implement a transnational strategy. Within this framework, tourism was recognized as a priority for the region's development. The key task in this process was to create an effective system for tourism destination management. This paper aims to define the concept of transnational tourism destination management and to provide a critical analysis of it. One of the study's objectives was to determine the nature of the changing determinants of tourism management in the Black Sea region and the relationships between key stakeholders. The author reviewed the existing scientific literature on tourism destination management and conducted a critical analysis of secondary sources, including documents, information materials, and Internet resources. Participant observation was chosen as the research method. The study identified three models of tourism destination management: marketing-oriented, planning-oriented, and management-oriented.

Keywords: Transnational tourism destination, tourism destination management, international cooperation, Black Sea region.

Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, due to geopolitical changes in Europe, the Baltic Sea region became an area of dynamic socio-economic cooperation. Georgia's status as an associate member of the European Union strengthened this cooperation. The next stage of the country's integration was the development of an innovative EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region in 2022.

This article presents a comparative analysis of the current concept and previously studied approaches to tourism destination management in the Black Sea countries. This approach helps to identify the determinants of tourism cooperation in the Black Sea region and contributes to the development of the concept of transnational tourism destination management. Of all the EU macro-regions, the BSR is the most advanced in developing transnational tourism; as a result, it serves as a testing ground from which the experience can be applied in other EU macro-regions. Discussion

There are many definitions of the term "tourist destination" in scientific literature; however, despite the various interpretations, the following main provisions can be identified when characterizing it:

- 1) a territory (commune [1], space, district, region, place [2]) that makes up the destination of tourists [3];
- 2) a set of entities (institutions [4], clusters [5]) that create conditions for tourism in the visited area;
- 3) a set of products consumed by visitors during their stay in this territory [6];
- 4) a set of impressions (sensations) that visitors receive from staying in this area [7].

Different approaches to defining the term "tourist destination" complement each other, which allows us to characterize it more fully [8].

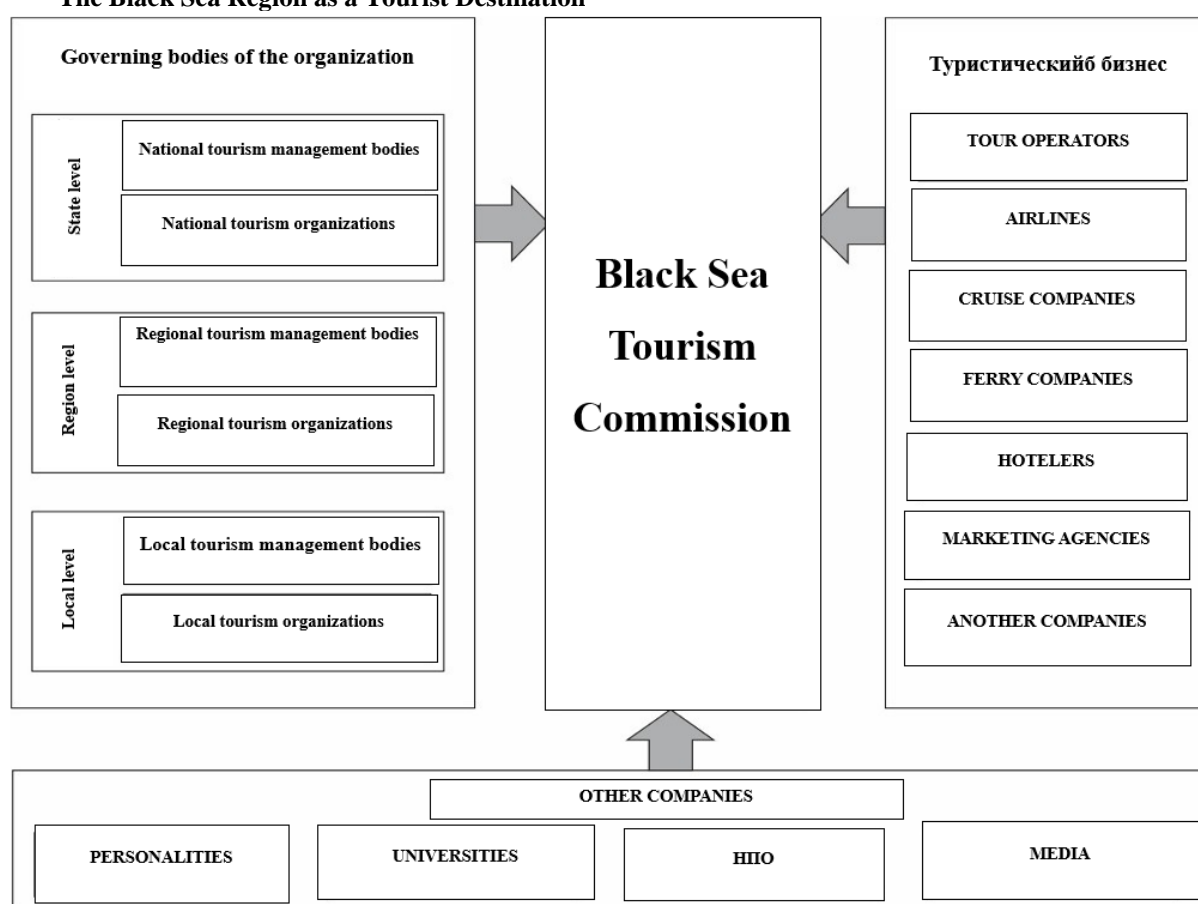
According to the definition given by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a tourist destination is "a physical space in which a visitor spends time with at least one overnight stay. It encompasses tourism products, including services, attractions, and resources, all within a single day of travel. This space has physical and administrative boundaries that determine the way it is managed, images and perceptions that create its market competitiveness." In turn, in the Guidelines of the European Commission on the Management of Sustainable Tourism Areas, a destination is characterized as:

1. a geographical area currently or potentially attractive to visitors/tourists;
2. a place or area that is clearly defined as a visitor destination and has a range of facilities and products that can be used for tourism purposes;
3. a place or area that is promoted as a destination for a tourist or consumer of tourism services;
4. a place or area where the visitor management process typically involves a range of public and private sector stakeholders, including the host community;
5. a place or area in which the supply of and demand for tourism services, i.e., the visitor economy, can be determined.

Numerous scientific studies demonstrate that tourist destinations are pivotal points for tourism development [9] and, consequently, for the study of tourism. At the same time, the difficulties of destination management stem from its complex nature [10], precisely the fact that destination management is carried out through a wide range of tools [11]. Destination management is often carried out by specialized professional institutions, known as destination management organizations [12]. Another standard solution is joint destination management, which

involves government bodies and organizations collaborating on specific types of work [13]. These tasks primarily concern marketing [14]; therefore, such organizations are referred to as “destination marketing organizations” [15]. In the case of international destinations, implementing management is significantly more complex, which is caused, among other factors, by different administrative structures, legal frameworks, and incompatibilities in tourism management systems. This is why researchers and practitioners are seeking new organizational, legal, and economic solutions to support the development of transnational tourism [16]. To manage tourist destinations, solutions developed within the framework of the theory of multilevel management [17] are utilized and adapted. They involve the inclusion of key stakeholders from the destination in the management process. In this way, the costs of developing tourism in the destination are shared among stakeholders.

The Black Sea Region as a Tourist Destination



The promotion of the Black Sea region as a transnational tourism destination began with the collapse of the USSR and the independence of the post-Soviet and Eastern European countries. In Europe, cross-border cooperation has been developing dynamically, encompassing not only countries but also regions and cities. The foundation for the sustainable development of the destination was the idea of leveraging the region's attractive historical and natural heritage, numerous connections between the states located on the Black Sea, and the willingness to cooperate, as highlighted by the enthusiasm expressed by the main stakeholders for tourism purposes. Since then, various destination management solutions have been implemented, categorized

The lack of a unified approach to understanding the boundaries and composition of the Black Sea region means that the issue of delimiting destinations in this region remains unresolved. There are many definitions of the term "Black Sea region" [18]. Undoubtedly, this region includes countries that have access to the Black Sea, but in some cases Belarus and Armenia, which do not have such access to the Black Sea, are also considered part of the region; these countries are located in the Black Sea basin and are functionally connected with the rest of the countries in the region.

For this study, it is permissible to assume that the Black Sea region covers the territories of Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, three of which (Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey) are NATO member states, and two (Ukraine and Georgia) are partner countries. The EU member states are Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye.

into three models: marketing and planning. The Black Sea Tourism Commission is a marketing-oriented destination management body that needs to be established. This commission would serve as an institution coordinating the marketing activities of key structures within the tourism system of the Black Sea region. It would be registered in a neutral European country, such as Switzerland, as an international non-governmental organization. The idea for its creation emerged during the Black Sea Scientific and Practical Tourism Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2022. The initiators of this organization should include representatives from the tourism industry, including tour operators, air carriers, sea carriers, and hoteliers. Additionally, government

bodies, local governments, tourism organizations at the national, regional, and local levels, and representatives

from the social sector should contribute. Additionally, consider becoming a member of the BTC (Fig. 2).

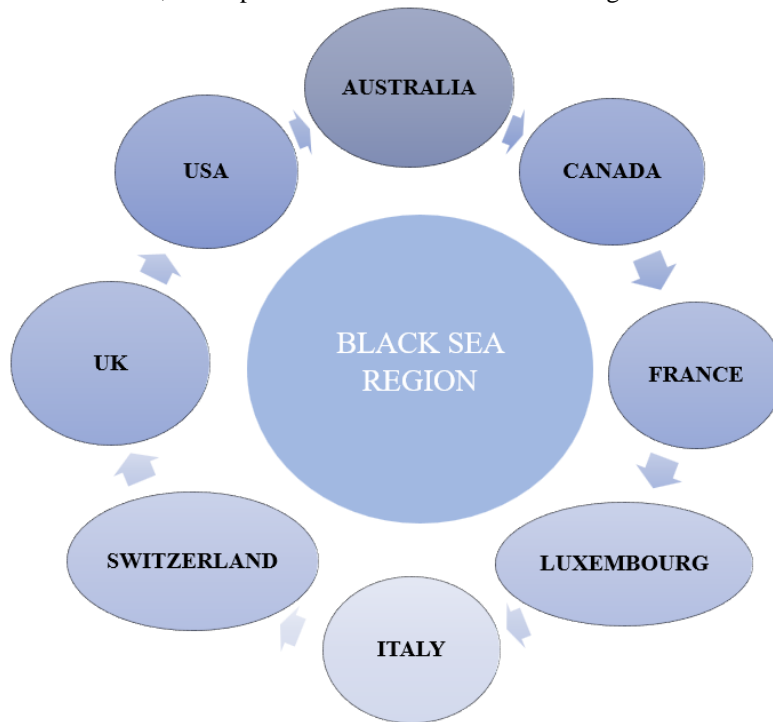


Fig. 2. Tourist sending countries that are members of the Black Sea Tourism Commission

It is worth noting that the Baltic Commission, for instance, included not only representatives of the relevant destinations but also organizations, primarily tour opera-

tors, from countries that send tourists (Fig. 3). This structure was instrumental in promoting tourism products in target markets, including foreign ones.

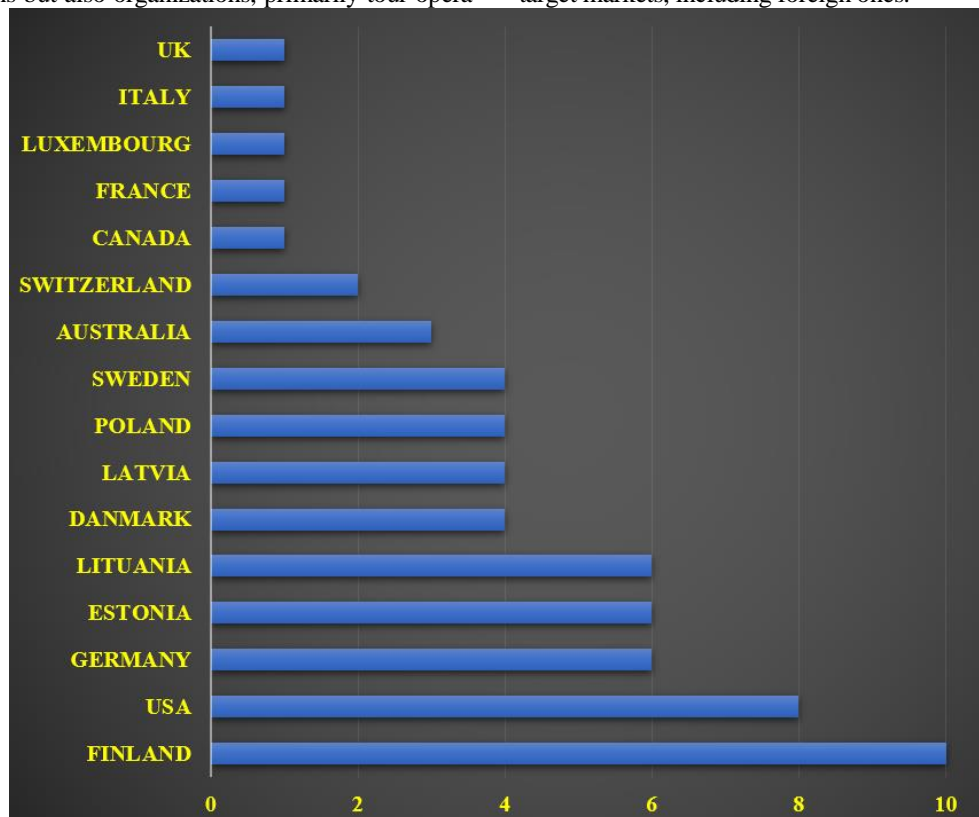


Fig. 4. Number of participants of the Black Sea Tourism Commission from different countries

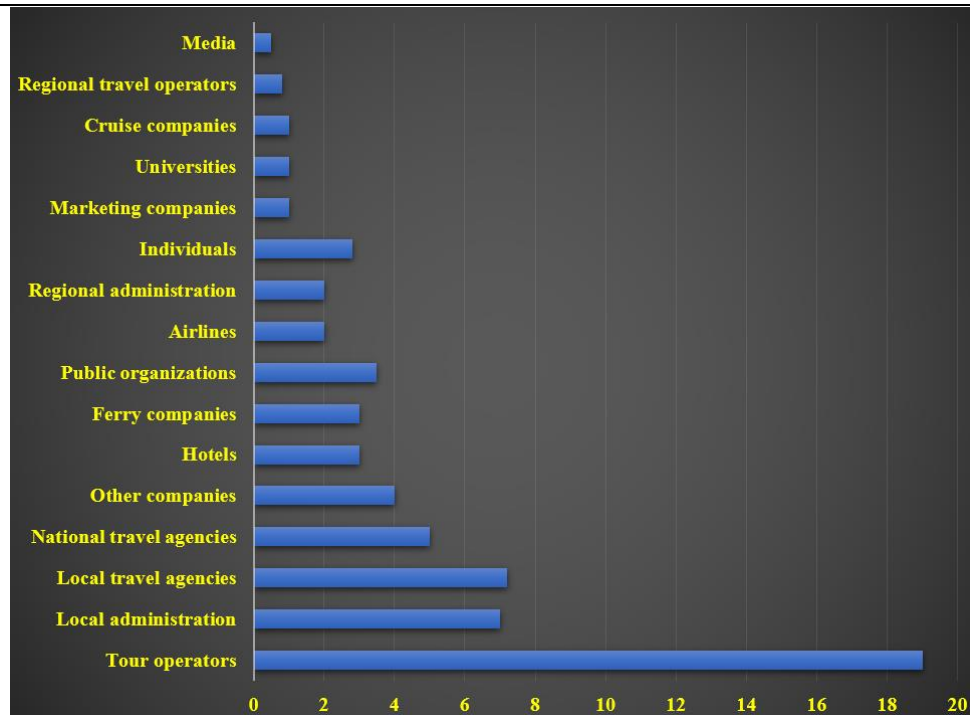


Fig. 5. Number of participants of the Black Sea Tourism Commission representing different categories

To enhance the coordination of its activities, the Black Sea Tourism Commission should establish branches in several countries within the Black Sea region. Its representative office should be located in Georgia, which is determined by the following circumstances: as noted, (i) Georgia is a link between European and Asian countries (in this case, between Turkey and the countries of Eastern Europe); (ii) in addition, by the countries of the Black Sea destination we also mean Belarus, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Armenia, which can use the ports of Georgia for direct water communication with the countries of Europe. Thus, although indirect, the connection with the countries of the Black Sea will strengthen economic, cultural, and political ties in the region.

Network for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Black Sea Region: Planning-oriented Destination Management

The Network Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region (NSTDBSR) platform was established by academic institutions and environmental organizations in the BSR as a bottom-up initiative. The organizers aimed to ensure sustainable tourism development in line with the guiding principles outlined in Agenda 21, developed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The Black Sea Tourism Centre: Management-oriented Destination Management. The Black Sea Tourism Centre will be an innovative tool for managing a

multi-level tourism destination. Its creation will be the result of long-term, synergistic cooperation in the Black Sea region, with a focus on tourism.

The European Commission adopted the EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region in June 2009. The pilot program was developed for the Baltic countries – former Soviet Union members – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The strategy implemented intergovernmental (e.g., VASAB or HELCOM projects) and transnational (bottom-up) cooperation in these countries and harmonised them within the EU cohesion policy. The strategy therefore does not replace existing networks and relationships [23], but instead leverages them [24]. The plan comprises four horizontal actions, three objectives, and 13 priority areas. Tourism policy is one of the 13 current common policy areas, the implementation of which focuses on the thematic areas of action carried out within the integrative framework – the EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region – and aimed at addressing the current and future challenges of the Black Sea region. Figure 6 provides an overview of the Action Plan of the Strategy, which defines its common objectives, policy areas, and horizontal actions. Tourism was assigned to the objective ‘Increasing prosperity’, mainly due to the estimated economic potential of the region.

Establishing an institution responsible for managing tourism destinations will take several years to accomplish. This topic was discussed at the Black Sea Tourism Forum.

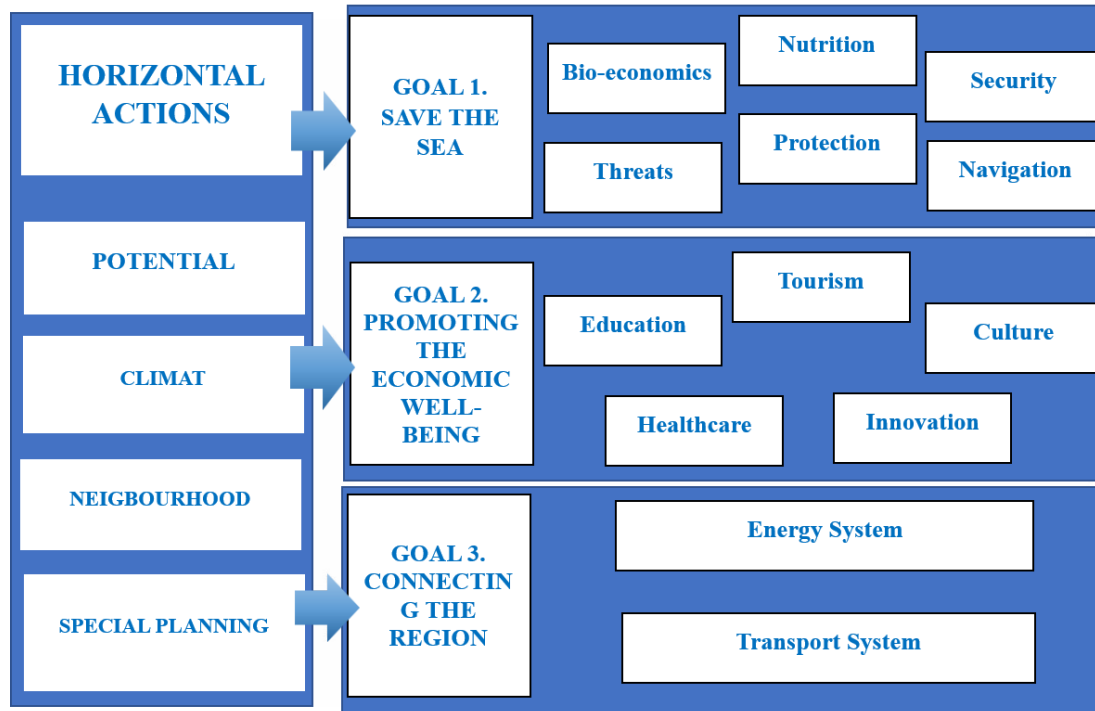


Fig. 6. Model of the EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region

The Black Sea Tourism Centre should be coordinated by the Ministry of Economy, Employment and Labour of Georgia. Organisations from the Black Sea countries should be involved in the development process. The institution aims to become a leading Centre of expertise, advocating for tourism development in the Black Sea region, fostering partnerships, and disseminating ideas and knowledge. We have identified the following tasks as the most important:

- pooling resources, sharing new knowledge to ensure readiness to respond to relevant trends;
- sharing experiences to solve common problems;
- providing information and enabling comparative analysis;
- obtaining information on participants, projects, and initiatives through coordination and strategic use of project results;
- supporting training and product development in the sectoral areas;
- increasing the importance of the territories, countries, and the entire Black Sea region as a tourist destination.

The management model of the Black Sea Tourism Centre, developed in 2018, is based on the concept of multi-level management. [26; 27]

It should be emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 halted all work at the Baltic Sea Tourism Centre and the study of creating a similar Centre for Black Sea countries, with headquarters in Georgia. The current situation is a serious threat to the development of tourist destinations. Numerous studies confirm that the European Territorial Cooperation funds play a key role in the development of tourism in border areas [29]. Meanwhile, the EU project to finance the Black Sea Tourism Centre has recently been completed, and alternative means of ensuring the continued existence of the management structure have yet to be identified.

Conclusion

The Black Sea region can be considered a transnational destination. It is distinguished by its high tourism potential, including transnational attractions, shared history, and fruitful long-term cooperation. However, the definition of the boundaries of the BSR is controversial, and therefore, the definition of the destination's boundaries is problematic. A reasonable definition of the boundaries suggests that the Region encompasses the Black Sea countries, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, among others. Additionally, Belarus, which is not part of the Black Sea region, occasionally participates in tourism cooperation. Organizations that co-manage tourism destinations typically include representatives from central and local administrative units, national and regional tourism organizations, as well as local entrepreneurs. Public organizations and educational institutions have limited participation. Numerous attempts have been made to coordinate tourism cooperation, and various tourism management structures have been established. To date, three concepts of tourism destination management have been implemented: marketing-oriented, planning-oriented, and multi-level management-oriented. The primary stakeholders involved in this process are large enterprises, including airlines, ferry companies, and hotel chains, which typically benefit significantly from membership in the Black Sea Tourism Commission and are therefore willing to finance the organization's activities.

The second concept is planning oriented towards tourism development based on the principles of sustainable development. The network for sustainable tourism development was created mainly by educational institutions, as well as environmental and public organizations. Valuable theoretical solutions were developed, but not the tools for their practical application. Unfortunately, this cooperation was financed by EU funds,

and with the completion of the relevant projects, funding for continuation of the work was not possible. The concept of multi-level tourism destination management is exciting due to the synergy between the Black Sea Tourism Center, the Black Sea Tourism Forum, and the EU Tourism Development Strategy at its core.

An analysis of the evolution of tourism destination management shows that maintaining the stability of the management structure requires significant financial participation of stakeholders. EU funds should only be used to establish management structures, but they cannot serve as the basis for their ongoing activities. Currently, the economic sector's role in the multi-level tourism management system in the BSR is limited. Public stakeholders are moderately involved in the development of transnational destinations, as they probably do not see sufficient benefits in cooperation.

One way to develop the destination is to use the opportunities provided by the constantly evolving EU Strategy for the Development of the Black Sea Region. This is a tool worth using, which will enable further activities related to the development and promotion of the BSR as an attractive, sustainable, and accessible transnational tourism destination.

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