

***“The balneary component of the Romanian tourism offer was the most consistent and most appreciated for ten years, with a special echo on the tourism markets and a good international promotion, due to the spectacular results and due to its ability to attract with this type of offer politicians and stars. Bucharest still has the “memory” of the balneary destination tradition and of the non-conventional treatments: Gerovital, Aslavital, Ana Aslan Institute and Clinics, the treatment base and clinics at former Flora Hotel (current Crowne Plaza Hotel ), the treatment clinics with sulphur waters in Pajura, on Herastrau Lake shore and Balotesti Clinics “Paul Marasoiu, president of Peacock Hotels and country manager of Golden Tulip Hotels tells Bucharest Herald.***

**Bucharest Herald:** How were the hoteliers affected by the financial crisis in 2007, considering the significant cut of business trips number to Romania? A Deloitte research reveals a 15 per cent occupancy rate drop in Bucharest hotels in 2008. How would you comment this result?

**Paul Marasoiu:** I can only comment the “accuracy” of this so called research and the sudden attention attached to a destination at which Deloitte has not looked before. We can hardly talk about a significant drop of business trips to Romania. The right conclusion can be drawn only after checking the air passenger traffic on Bucharest’s international airports. The only aspect we can take into account is a relative shrink, by 4 to 6 per cent, of the occupancy rates, in the last three months of 2008. For the hoteliers 2008 was a good year, full of challenges and competition, but in the end a year with good results. They also managed to keep the occupancy rates relatively unchanged compared with 2007, despite the fact that Bucharest gradually received in 2008, another approximately 1,200 rooms. So the logical conclusion of any study should be that the hotel services demand increased. The investment appetite for “hospitality real estate” had increased too much and too obvious and fortunately, it remained at a high level, only temporarily tempered by financing difficulties.

**B.H:** What would be the evolution of the tourism market in 2009, in the context of the global financial crisis and taking into account the new governing program?

**Paul Marasoiu:** I am convinced that in 2009, with minimum will and an intelligent approach we will have at least last year’s results. The new Tourism Minister could have a significant contribution to catch up with image, promotion, market policies and regulation delays. I am sure that Elena Udrea is determined enough to lay on Government’s table the problems of the hospitality industry long time ignored and to mobilize that political will necessary to turn tourism into a priority area strategic for Romania’s development. Tourism has all the chances to become one of the main engines of the national economy from 2009. A crisis period is a good development opportunity for those who have will, intelligence and resources. I think we have them all. It remains to see in 2010.

**BH:** How were the hotels within Golden Tulip chain affected by the crisis in 2008? Were tariff or staff cuts necessary to maintain the expenses at a certain level?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Golden Tulip hotels were not affected at all by the crisis or by any other factors

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in 2008. As long as the hotel has a consolidated image and offer on the market, an intelligent tariff policy, flexible and adjusted to the conditions, the staff is a team of professionals motivated and dedicated to the property for which they work and the management is serious, the hotel definitely has a constant customers portfolio and will not have to cut the staff, the wages or the prices. We hope to have the same answer for 2010, considering the concrete conditions in 2009.

**BH:** Will Golden Tulip brand expand with new hotels in the country in 2009?

**Paul Marasoiu:** For 2009 we are planning to inaugurate minimum three new hotels Golden Tulip Ana – Cluj, Golden Tulip Paladium – Bucharest and Tulip Inn Moieciu. We will open two new independent hotels in Bucharest and Sibiu. We will manage the hotel in Bucharest and the hotel in Sibiu is a potential future Tulip Inn.

**BH:** How would you comment the initiative of the new Tourism Minister, Elena Udrea, to exploite Bucharest’s balneary potential?

**Paul Marasoiu:** I have to stress that this is one of the most intelligent option to “reformulate” Bucharest’s tourism offer. Unfortunately Bucharest is not Prague and it lacks the motivation of a trip to a destination similar to an outdoor museum. There are efforts to change the outlook of the city, the specific offer, the information possibilities and the general perception of Bucharest. The Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Bucharest, where the City Hall, the professional associations and the Tourism Ministry have important and clearly defined roles, is making all these efforts. The balneary component of the Romanian tourism offer was the most consistent and most appreciated for ten years, with a special echo on the tourism markets and a good international promotion, due to the spectacular results and due to its ability to attract with this type of offer politicians and stars. Bucharest still has the “memory” of the balneary destination tradition and of the non-conventional treatments: Gerovital, Aslavital, Ana Aslan Institute and Clinics, the treatment base and clinics at former Flora Hotel (current Crowne Plaza Hotel ), the treatment clinics with sulphur waters in Pajura, on Herastrau Lake shore and Balotesti Clinics. The fact that Bucharest is by excellence a business destination is not necessarily a good thing. We definitely need a complementary offer, that could determine a longer stay, not just transit with an average duration of 1.7 days. The balneary offer, completed with the complex cultural offer and with the promotion of the architectural patrimony, the artistic life, the sports and high life events and why not the capital at night revealing Bucharest’s tourism, could determine in the next years a constant occupancy rate of minimum 20 to 22 per cent. On the other hand Bucharest will permanently benefit from businessmen’s attention related to the fact that “the exact hour is set here” but also to the attempt to turn the capital into a destination for international events.

**B.H:** What benefits could the initiative to attract to Romania more Russian tourists and ex-Soviet Union countries’ tourists bring? What is the percentage of these tourists to Romania at the moment?

**Paul Marasoiu:** We can talk about a “reasonable” percentage compared to the other markets and to the moment in which this relationship started to become “reactive”. The main attraction

for Russian speaking markets is represented by treatment trips, seaside trips and winter sports. The potential of these markets is extremely high both in terms of tourism traffic the periods in which they are willing to buy tourism program can generate and the local services appetite, except for those acquired in tourism packages.

### Turismul de wellness, capabil sa salveze Bucurestiul de eticheta “destinatie business”

*“Componenta balneara a ofertei romanesti a fost cea mai consistenta si cea mai apreciata, vreme de zeci de ani, avand o rezonanta speciala pe pietele turistice, dar si o buna mediatizare internationala, datorita rezultatelor spectaculoase si datorita atragerii cu acest tip de oferta a “mai marilor vremii”, oameni politici, vedete, magnati. Bucurestiul are inca “amintirea” traditiei de destinatie balneara si de tratamente neconventionale ( Gerovital, Aslavital), Institutul si Clinica Ana Aslan, clinica si baza de tratament de la fostul hotel Flora ( actual Crowne Plaza ), Clinica de tratament cu ape sulfuroase din Pajura, pe malul lacului Herastrau, Clinica de la Balotesti.” a declarat intr-un interviu pentru Bucharest Herald Paul Marasoiu, presedinte al Peacock Hotels si manager pentru Romania al Golden Tulip Hotels.*

**Bucharest Herald:** Cum au fost afectati hotelierii de criza financiara in 2008, avand in vedere reducerea semnificativa a numarului calatoriilor de afaceri in Romania? Un studiu Deloitte evidentiaza o scadere cu 15 la suta a ratei de ocupare in hotelurile din Bucuresti, in 2008. Cum comentati acest rezultat?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Nu pot comenta decat “acuratetea” asa zisului studiu si atentia acordata subit unei destinatii ce nu a facut pana acum obiectul preocuparilor lor. Nici pe departe nu vorbim de o reducere semnificativa a calatoriilor de afaceri in Romania. Se poate trage concluzia corecta numai verificand volumul traficului aerian international pe aeroporturile Capitalei. Singurul aspect pe care il putem lua in considerare este o scadere relativa, in ultimele trei luni ale anului 2008, cu 4-6 la suta a gradului de ocupare. Pentru hotelierii din Bucuresti 2008 a fost un an bun, plin de provocari si competitie, dar in final un an cu rezultate bune si cu pastrarea gradului de ocupare relativ neschimbat fata de 2007, in ciuda faptului ca Bucurestiul a primit, progresiv, pe parcursul anului 2008 o capacitate suplimentara de circa 1200 camere. Deci, concluzia logica a oricarui studiu ar trebui sa fie ca cererea specifica de servicii hoteliere a crescut. Crescuse prea mult si prea evident apetitul investitional in “hospitality real estate” si, din fericire, a ramas la aceleasi cote inalte, doar temperat pentru moment de dificultatile de finantare.

**BH:** Care credeti ca va fi evolutia turismului in 2009, in contextul crizei financiare globale si luand in considerare noul program de guvernare?

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**Paul Marasoiu:** Am convingerea ca in 2009, cu un minim de vointa si cu o abordare inteligenta a pietei, vom avea cel putin rezultatele anului precedent. Noul Minister al Turismului va putea sa aiba un aport considerabil la recuperarea ramanerilor in urma ale domeniului la capitolele imagine, promovare, politici de piata si reglementare. Sunt convins ca noul Ministru al Turismului este suficient de tenace si determinat sa impuna la masa Guvernului problemele ignorate de multa vreme ale industriei ospitalitatii si sa determine acea necesara vointa politica de a face din turism, mai mult decat declarativ, domeniu prioritar strategic al dezvoltarii Romaniei. Turismul are toate sansele sa devina unul din motoarele principale ale economiei nationale inca din 2009. O perioada de criza este un bun prilej de crestere pentru cei care au vointa, inteligenta si resurse. Eu zic ca le avem. Ramane sa vorbim in 2010.

**BH:** Cum au fost afectate hotelurile din lantul Golden Tulip, de criza financiara in 2008? Au fost necesare reducerea tarifelor sau reduceri de personal pentru a mentine cheltuielile la o anumita valoare?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Raspunsul este unul pentru toate hotelurile care activeaza sub marca Golden Tulip: in nici un fel nu au fost afectate in 2008, de criza sau alti factori. Atata timp cat hotelul este consolidat pe piata ca imagine si oferta, are o politica tarifara inteligent adaptata conditiilor si flexibila, cat personalul este constituit intr-o echipa de profesionisti motivati si dedicati proprietatii in care lucreaza, iar managementul este serios si performant, atunci sigur hotelul are un portofoliu constant de clienti si nu va fi nevoit sa diminueze personalul, sa reduca salariile sau sa micsoreze preturile. Avem speranta ca acelasi raspuns sa-l putem da si in 2010, raportandu-ne la conditiile concrete din 2009.

**BH:** Exista intentia de extindere cu noi hoteluri in tara in 2009? Ce alt gen de investitii pregatiti pentru anul acesta?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Pentru 2009 vizam inaugurarea a minim trei noi hoteluri, Golden Tulip Ana – Cluj, Golden Tulip Paladium – Bucuresti si Tulip Inn Moieciu. Vom inaugura doua noi hoteluri independente la Bucuresti si Sibiu, cel din Bucuresti aflat sub managementul nostru, iar cel din Sibiu un posibil viitor Tulip Inn.

**BH:** Cum comentati propunerea noului Ministru al Turismului, Elena Udrea, de a exploata potentialul balnear al Bucurestiului, o destinatie consacrata turismului de business pana in prezent?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Este una dintre cele mai inteligente optiuni privind “reformularea” ofertei turistice a Capitalei. Din pacate Bucurestiul nu este Praga, motivatia calatoriei si sejurului intr-o destinatie asimilata unui muzeu in aer liber, precum Praga, lipsind pentru Bucuresti. Se fac eforturi de schimbare a felului cum arata orasul, a ofertei specific, a posibilitatilor de informare si a perceptiei generale privind Bucurestiul, constituindu-se Asociatia de Promovare si Dezvoltare a Turismului in Bucuresti, unde Primaria Generala, asociatiile profesionale si Ministerul Turismului au roluri importante si clar definite. Componenta balneara a ofertei Romanesti a fost cea mai consistent si cea mai apreciata vreme de zeci de ani, avand o rezonanta speciala pe pietele turistice, dar si o buna mediatizare internationala, datorita rezultatelor spectaculoase si datorita atragerii cu acest tip de oferta a “mai marilor vremii”, oameni politici, vedete, magnati.

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**BH:** Cat de benefica ar putea fi initiativa de a atrage in Romania mai multi turisti proveniti din Rusia si din statele ex-sovietice? Care este in prezent ponderea acestor turisti in Romania?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Vorbim de o pondere “convenabila” in raport cu celelalte piete si cu momentul la care a inceput sa fie “reactivata” aceasta relatie. Atractia principala a pietelor rusofone o constituie sejururile de tratament, cele de litoral si sporturile de iarna. Potentialul acestor piete este deosebit de mare atat in raport cu volumul de trafic turistic pe care il pot genera, perioadele la care sunt dispusi sa cumpere programe turistice ( inclusiv capete de sezon ) si “apetitul” de consum local de servicii, in afara celor deja achizitionate in pachetul turistic.

**BH:** Cum se va implica Romanian Convention Bureau in programul propus de Ministerul Turismului?

**Paul Marasoiu:** Se va implica in limita competentelor si expertizei de piata in domeniul MICE ( meetings, incentive, conventions, exhibitions ), grefand acest tip de produs si oferta pe structurile existente in statiunile balneare si pe litoral, participand in acest fel la generarea unor complementaritati si sinergii intre tipuri diferite de oferte, dar care pot coexista in mod eficient, determinand extinderea sezonului estival pe litoral si majorand capacitatea ocupata in statiuni balneare.