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مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والجذب السياحي
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

VENDOR TALK – JUNE 2022

STRATEGIC MOVES TO ATTRACT THE FASTEST GROWING TRAVEL SEGMENT:

*Becoming More Inclusive is
Not Just the Right Thing to Do,
IT IS GOOD BUSINESS!*



The autistic community and other persons of determination travel segment have expanded rapidly in the last few years. With more certified options becoming available for these individuals and their families to visit, there is an increase in demand for additional travel destinations and entertainment options to build upon their inclusion and accessibility practices. More awareness brings new opportunities to reach this growing travel market and attract new visitors.

32 Million

trips are taken annually by autistic individuals
or other persons of determination

Autism Diagnosis Rates By Country



Qatar: 1 in 66
Niger: 1 in 82
South Africa: 1 in 84
UAE: 1 in 89

Egypt: 1 in 89
Oman: 1 in 93
Bahrain: 1 in 97
Saudi Arabia: 1 in 99

600%
increase in
autism
diagnosis

Millions of Adults are autistic but never formal diagnosed

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What is Autism?

As autism diagnoses continue to rise in the Middle East and North African region, so does the need for more options and supports for these individuals. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is categorized as a developmental disability that can cause social, communication, and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how autistic people look that sets them apart from others, but autistic individuals may: Communicate - Interact - Behave – Learn Differently than others. Some autistic individuals need a lot of help in their daily lives, while others may not require formal or visible supports but have sensory needs or other differences.

Did you Know?

One in six people have a sensory need or sensitivity, which means many of the guests you currently serve would benefit from adjustments (even small ones) to make them repeat and loyal visitors.

Offering low sensory hours, dietary options or quiet zones are little steps that can help improve the guest experience. With a high percentage of needs, exploring options to better accommodate these sensitives can have a significant impact. Readily available trainings, tools and resources now available in the market can help attractions get the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) credential, enabling them to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity at their locations.



“I was handed an early childhood project and asked to develop it. I did a lot of a lot of research and spoke to experts both locally and internationally including child psychologists and occupational therapists.

At this point of the implementation, I’m flying blind. This project development acted as a catalyst for taking the next step, training and certification.”

- Frank Raubenheimer, Operations Manager of Aventura Parks Dubai



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How Is This Travel Segment Effecting the Entertainment Industry?

Autistic individuals and other persons of determination are among the fastest-growing travel segments worldwide. As awareness and acceptance grow in the travel and entertainment space, these individuals seek options that are ready to welcome and understand their needs.

Staff training, awareness, and additional small accommodations can make all the difference in families visiting one attraction or location over another. Often, these families become raving loyal fans and come back again and again when they feel heard, seen, and welcome. Do you have the tools and resources to welcome these guests?

Communication is key. Through training and ongoing support from a 3rd party provider, your facility can provide guides, communication, recommendations, and insights to help your guests understand and plan their visit more effectively. This commitment can lead to more repeat business.

ROI Seen As Result of Training & Certification



Millions
of web hits



Triple digit increase in
out of market guests



Huge boost in
guest satisfaction



54% increase in
group bookings

Return on investment seen in the travel market as a result of training and certification



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What Can You Do to Become More Inclusive & Attract New Visitors?

Many autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals may find it challenging to visit new places or plan family trips due to a lack of staff training and understanding, the potential for sensory overload, and the need for flexible options or accommodations.

However, 3rd party training and certification programs are available to provide best practices, tools, and resources to create a more inclusive environment and increase the likelihood of autistic guests feeling less hesitation in visiting. Communication is key to these families. Through training and ongoing support from a 3rd party provider, your facility can provide guides, communication recommendations, and insights to help your guests understand and plan their visit more effectively. This commitment can lead to more repeat business.

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What do attractions with CAG trainings and certifications say?



“We’re always looking at ways of giving back to the community and be more inclusive. So, with the increase in people who are diagnosed with autism and other sensory conditions, we want to make sure that we’re partnering with the right people to give us guidance, opinions and support.

I’m very aware that it’s easy for people to stand up and say, oh, you should take our program you should take our certification. And again, as an operator as a manager, you’re kind of thinking, sure, that sounds great, but I’ve got so much on my plate already. I have other things I need to do.

I want to assure you that haven’t gone through the process with over 800 colleagues. It’s really not bad. And what is awesome was the very easy, very amazing and great online learning system from our partner. We also learned over the course of doing this was that it take Connection, Communication. It’s always the simplest things that make the biggest difference.”

- Emma Robb, Training Manager, Marine & Waterpark Operations at Atlantis Dubai



“When you work with a training and certification partner, they are there to support you and to advise your employees and yourself on how to come down to your guests’ level, to know how to talk to them and how to react to make these guests feel the same as every single person that enters your destination.

And that’s what’s key.”

- Cliff Poulton, General Manager of Aventura Parks Dubai

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Author Credits:

*This article is contributed by **IBCCES - The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards**, a leader in cognitive disorder training and certification in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education, and corporate professionals around the globe.*

For more than 20 years, IBCCES has been the leader in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education, and corporate professionals around the globe. IBCCES is the only credentialing organization providing training and certification programs specifically for attractions, hotels, zoos, aquariums, and other entertainment locations to ensure all families and individuals can make memories and have fun. IBCCES' programs include evidence-based training as well as the perspectives of autistic individuals, alongside other tools and resources such as onsite reviews and customized recommendations, and renewal requirements to ensure the program is a long-term commitment that has a lasting impact.

Connect with IBCCES today at ibcces.org or talk with Hany Nafad directly at +971 50 466 2830 or hany@ibcces.org to learn more about the options available for your facility.

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