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VENDOR TALK – JUNE 2023

BRINGING CREATIVE WAVES TO THE MENA REGION

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE

Article by:



A look at the expanding MENA leisure & entertainment market

The water park market continues to grow and evolve since its inception in the early 1900s. Today, it continues to gain popularity worldwide, introducing innovations in design, attractions, theming, sustainability and technology. In the MENA region specifically, the spend on leisure, amusement, and theme parks is expected to reach \$609 million (Dh2.23 billion) in 2023, according to a recent report issued by International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, a global industry association.

The leisure industry in the MENA region has grown exponentially following the removal of travel restrictions after the Covid-19 pandemic and has been boosted further by the continuing effects of Expo 2020 Dubai and the World Cup football tournament in Qatar.



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Meanwhile the Saudi Arabian government has played a central role in supporting the growth of the entertainment sector by implementing the vision of the General Authority Entertainment (GAE) under the direction of the Public Investment Fund (PIF). According to Renub Research, the Saudi Arabia Entertainment & Amusement market will reach \$1.17 billion by the end of 2030.

This boom in leisure and tourism is driving not only amusement parks and family entertainment centres but resulting in a regional need to bring creative water amenities to citizens and tourists as a fun and thrilling way for families to beat the MENA heat!



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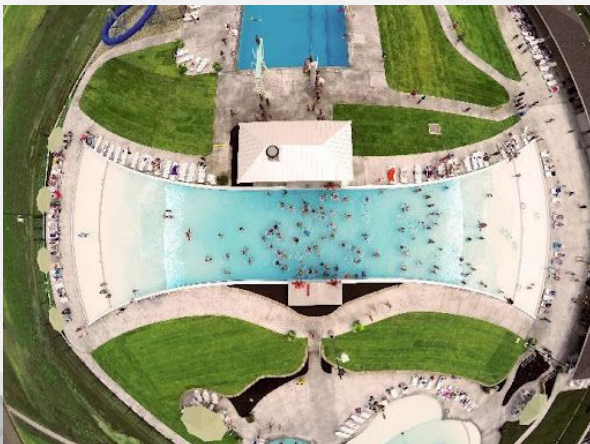
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Evolution of water park-based attractions

The water park industry is witnessing an evolution too, evident by the emergence of a diverse range of water ride attractions in the market. This evolution has park owners reconsidering their traditional approach to adding typical water park "staple attractions" as they may have done in the past. Operators are now actively seeking fresh approaches to attract new guests and encourage returning guests to spend more time on the property, engaging in play and expenditure.

The growing demand from guests revolves around novelty, innovation, family appeal and thrilling experiences. To cater to these preferences, water parks are introducing first-to-market wave-based attractions that aim to captivate guests of all ages and skill levels. These attractions not only offer significantly improved rider throughput and capacity within a similar space as traditional slide complexes but also have the potential to enhance the overall guest experience, increasing the length of stay and per capita spending by acting as complete a "destination setting." The introduction of these innovative cutting-edge rides and experiences contributes to a higher rate of guest return and overall customer satisfaction in water parks – and a better bottom line for the park.

Not your parent's wave pool!



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Recent advancements in wave pool design and technology have revolutionised the traditional concept, offering exciting and unique experiences for visitors. Among these innovations is the DualBeach/Dual Entry Wave Pool, which displays a distinctive appearance and immersive experience. Utilising a shallower design and a customised wave flow pattern allows guests of all ages to make the most of the entire pool, easily traversing from one end to the other. By eliminating "dead space" and doubling the usable area, this innovative wave pool can accommodate nearly twice as many visitors as a traditional one. Moreover, its flexible design can be tailored to fit into a smaller footprint, making it an ideal attraction for parks with limited area availability.

Another groundbreaking twist in wave pool reimagining is the introduction of dual-purpose boogie boarding and recreational wave pool rides. This thrilling concept takes the excitement of a regular wave pool to new heights, offering large, consistent and perfectly timed breaking waves. Guests can now launch and ride boogie boards along the entire length of the pool, simulating the exhilaration of catching ocean waves and riding them to shore.

As a skill-based attraction, each ride offers a unique experience, encouraging guests to repeatedly ride and improve their boogie boarding skills. In 2016, the water park industry witnessed the first installation of this type of ride at Water World, located just outside of Denver, Colorado in the US. Known for its commitment to variety and innovation, Water World saw the boogie boarding ride as a fantastic opportunity to differentiate their park and breathe new life into an underutilised traditional wave pool. Joann Cortez, Communications Director of Cowabunga Beach had excitedly stated, "Having a boogie boarding beach in a landlocked state has provided our guests with a one-of-a-kind experience, and they absolutely love it!"

These wave pool innovations not only maximise capacity but also offer the potential for increased surrounding deck space. This expansion allows for additional passive capacity, as well as the inclusion of food and beverage areas and shaded zones. Wave pools typically occupy a significant footprint within water parks, and industry visionaries are capitalising on this space, aiming to create the biggest splash possible.



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The lazy river? No more!

With the latest wave and propulsion technology, the lazy river is lazy no more! Rivers have undergone transformation with increased speed, exciting wave action, waterfalls, creative theming and grottos. Action rivers are taking centre stage and transforming the typical river ride experience into a fast, fun and thrilling attraction that will keep guests coming back for more. Adding to the uniqueness and fun of the river itself are the uniquely designed ports of entry and exit that utilise the river's wave action to create a wave pool, virtually eliminating the need for any lines.

Surfing Made for ALL!



Surfing is one of the fastest growing sports on the planet. Currently, there are 35 million surfers worldwide and the global Surf market is approaching \$50 billion. Due to the increase in popularity of the sport, the surf population in the US is up 94% in the last 17 years. This growth can be largely attributed to the fact that surfing was integrated into the Olympic programme for the Tokyo 2020 Games.

One of the most significant impacts on the surf industry is the increase of man-made surf experiences and parks entering the market. Traditional barriers to entry including geographical location, cost of equipment, training, fear of the ocean/sharks, don't know how to swim and more are being overcome due to these man-made surf pools, making surfing more accessible to the masses than ever before.

To meet these needs of consumers (existing and aspiring surfers alike!), surf technologies are continuing to emerge in the form of big surf wave lagoons, or even smaller footprint deep water standing waves.



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The size of the system (vast surf lagoon or compact standing wave) can vary depending on the client's business goals, budget and land availability. Some of these companies are making strides to find creative ways to engage new surfers. Retractable training bars, intimate footprint for training/lessons, adjustable wave height, drain dry safety system, recovery areas that don't require the ability to swim and more are all ways that industry suppliers are creatively finding solutions to make new surfers feel a level of comfort when trying out the sport. These system features also lend themselves to the adaptive community which makes the sport of surfing more accessible than ever before.

Not just fun for aspiring surfers, these technologies are more advanced than ever before - bringing the real feel as a training platform for professionals and competitors alike!

The repetition and consistency of the wave, the ability to practice tricks, the go-go-go nature instead of paddling out in the ocean and waiting to catch a wave, the environment (rain, storm, no waves) – all these variables are taken out of the equation, allowing surfers to train, refine their technique and perform stronger than ever before.





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Camden Hoover, a 16-year-old North American World Surf League Qualifying Series competitor, certified big wave surfer and surf instructor has surfed and trained on a deep-water standing wave technology called EpicSurf.

After practicing and making multiple visits to the venue in New York she said, “After practicing on the wave, my arms were better, and I could move my body differently in ways I wasn’t able to before. I was putting more power into my turns and turn frontside and backside so consistently. Everything was a lot cleaner and sharper; I came home and won a contest the next week.”

Kid sized fun & parent sized comfort

Gone are the days of small kiddie areas with your standard dump bucket. Now, even the youngest guests can enjoy their own wave powered water ride. Mini wave pools, specifically designed for toddlers and the younger crowd, provide a fun yet gentle wave experience for the next generation of water park guests.



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Incorporating wave action alongside the traditional spray-and-play components and creative theming, these mini wave attractions cater to the specific desires of our youngest guests.

Not to be forgotten, however, are the accompanying adults. These children's areas now are innovative in their design to include additional shade, lounge for families and in-water side wall seating areas that extend throughout the length of the attraction. Not only does this smartly designed seating provide easier accessibility to children at multiple points throughout the attraction, it is also a more comfortable setting encouraging families to stay and play longer, thereby enhancing the overall experience and dwell time at the park.

Having fun while protecting the planet

Water parks can provide enjoyment while upholding eco-friendly principles. Designers are currently innovating new approaches to incorporate advanced environmental systems that minimise water consumption. In several parts of the world, water parks are utilising sustainable techniques to significantly reduce water usage through the implementation of smart technology. By reimagining the design of rides, these parks are curtailing water usage by as much as 75% compared to conventional slides and rides. Some water parks are creatively adopting rainwater harvesting practices, wherein collected rainwater is treated and utilised for irrigation purposes.

Another system of sustainable water and leisure parks is to utilise geothermal heating and cooling systems. By harnessing the natural heat beneath the earth's surface through a transfer system, the water pipes are heated/cooled to naturally manage the water temperature at the parks with lower energy consumption, thereby contributing to a reduced carbon footprint. Fun doesn't have to negatively impact the planet – and the leisure and entertainment industry is creatively advancing designs, rides, and systems to conduct more green practices.



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Making a big splash

The water park sector is experiencing a continued growth, followed by the increase of cutting-edge technology, innovative designs and overall park advancements. This global expansion of water parks, including the MENA region, has revolutionised the way people of all ages enjoy rides, and have fun.



The dynamic world of water parks is in a constant state of evolution, continually churning out first-to-market concepts that ensure friends and families encounter something fresh and exciting with each visit. These emerging trends within water parks are making waves in the industry and captivating operators, suppliers and guests around the world.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) is one of North America's most respected water park and recreational design, construction and manufacturing firms in the industry. ADG's products & services have been utilised in over 4,000 facilities worldwide, spanning six continents. They have designed, engineered and constructed more than 100 indoor and outdoor waterparks, and over 500 wave pools and specialty wave systems around the world. ADG has won numerous IAAPA Brass Ring and WWA Leading Edge Awards for their projects and products. Visit- www.aquaticgroup.com



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