

Topics and trends

Saving energy and providing energy: the swimming pool and wellness industry is set to showcase itself as a revitalising, sustainable and confident sector

Energy and water – two topics that are the focus of attention in the swimming pool and wellness industry. But other social and political developments are also influencing the market: the growing need for safety, greater health awareness, demographic change as well as inflation and changes in the energy markets. The trend for warmer weather is also having an impact on the market for private pools and wellness facilities. But as the swimming pool, sauna and wellness industry is predominantly made up of medium-sized companies, it is able to respond flexibly and quickly to new operating conditions. At aquanale, which will be hosted in Cologne from 24 to 27 October 2023, the sector will demonstrate how it is able to achieve this. Pool experts have their finger on the pulse with their sophisticated products and technologies – they've got plenty of solutions to challenges.

Home is where the heart is

The tougher the outside world is, the greater the need to create a safe, private sanctuary of well-being. This simple formula sums up a development known as “cocooning”, to use the buzzword. The post-corona era continues to be marked by a sense of crisis and uncertainties, which is why the home remains an important sphere of life. But now people are aware that they can do much more than just live in their homes.

Their private space can also be a workspace, gym and place of relaxation. It's no wonder, then, that the management consultancy Accenture predicts in its study “Decade of the Home” that investments will continue to shift to the domestic sphere. We're moving in the direction of “barbecue and pool party in the garden” and away from “dining out in a restaurant and then heading on to the club”.

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Outdoor living in a private green oasis

New Work makes mobile working possible – and anyone who spends more time inside their own four walls is likely to spend money on their home. By the same token, having “a little bit of green” is becoming more and more important. The desire to be close to nature is palpable – including in the home. And outdoor living is booming with the general trend for hotter weather.

A garden that's used intensively needs an inviting atmosphere. Instead of seeing house, garden and pool as separate entities, they are merging into one overall concept best summed up as “life on the water”. But it's not just about swimming – people want this space to be revitalising, a place where they can enjoy nature and meet up with friends. The garden is becoming an oasis of green with a range of water-based attractions and activities. And with today's holistic mindset, the outdoor area is given a finishing touch with suitable plants, outdoor furniture and design elements. An outdoor kitchen or a grill station can also be a part of it. All this creates a little paradise, perfect for getting away from everyday life.

The staycation – the no-fly holiday alternative

A pool outside brings the South Seas to the back garden, creating a holiday idyll that can be reached without travelling. And it can be enjoyed for much longer than a 14-day long-haul trip. Staycationing is the no-fly alternative way to holiday. But simply not flying isn't enough for today's environmentally conscious consumers. A home swimming pool should also consume as few resources as possible.

The first European environmental standard for private swimming pools

To further increase energy awareness, the industry has drawn up EN 17645, a European standard that regulates energy efficiency classifications for private pools. But even before this voluntary obligation was introduced, the sector had already shown that it was acting responsibly with its sophisticated product developments: Technologies and products that save energy and water dominate the market.

Conserving resources and looking stylish

However, “just” conserving resources wouldn't be enough for players in the pool industry. Even a pool cover – the number one device for saving energy and reducing evaporation – should look stylish and be convenient to use. Available in a selection of colours, it glides over the water on a

remote-controlled roller that lowers to the bottom of the pool when it is in use. Pumps are not “just” energy-efficient. They offer “relaxation for the ears” because they run quietly. The desire to be as close as possible to nature is reflected throughout the sector’s entire product range – even when it comes to pool linings. They are now available with natural stone-look films. The industry has succeeded in visualising nature. Not only that: It has also succeeded in making it tangible – for instance with counter-current units that recreate a river’s current.

Customers don’t just want their own pool to be eco-friendly. They also expect pool companies to follow a resource-efficient strategy. This gives companies that focus on this aspect a considerable advantage – businesses that use alternative energy sources in their production process, for example, expand the recyclability of their products, make a point of sourcing their materials locally or work with regional suppliers. Think global – act local.

Open to the world – and open in design

The swimming pool market has become more global – international is normal. This development is prompting people to be more open – more open to new ideas, different approaches and alternative perspectives. This openness can also be seen in design. Light shades, transparent surfaces, natural materials, a purist aesthetic and open concepts – this is what 2023 calls for. And it is reflected in stunning pool and wellness facilities with straight lines and clear shapes. They are simple and unpretentious, but classic and chic at the same time.

But ultimately, the individualisation megatrend is pervading all design trends. Anyone who has an appetite for wellness can have their facility designed to suit their personal preferences. Design freedom instead of fixed templates – this is what it all comes down to in the end.

International is the order of the day

The same trends and design movements can be seen all over the world. And to prove it, aquanale will host not only national and international exhibitors and visitors, but also the annual gathering of the World Alliance of Pool and Spa Associations (WAPSA) and the prize-giving ceremony for the EUSA Award, which honours excellence in swimming pool and spa construction.

In addition, the congress programme at the event, the International Swimming Pool and Wellness Forum, will address topics such as energy, sustainability and the shortage of skilled workers that affect the entire

swimming pool and wellness industry. What's more, this year's edition of aquanale has a partner country: Switzerland. And under the banner of "Sauna from Finland", the Scandinavians will present the art of sauna building.

Strengthening body and soul – flexibly and safely

Today, leading a healthy, active life means more than just ploughing away on the treadmill and doggedly slogging your way through your training programme. Enjoyment instead of achievement – that's what people want now. Doing natural sequences of movements in the fresh air, finding yourself and tuning out the constant newsreel of global crises – these desires are best met with a private pool that is part of an open-air living room. As an always-open gym, it guarantees that the residents will work out regularly. And it meets the desire for flexibility, too.

Some people still have the pandemic in their minds. They remember how crucial having a personal retreat is to feeling safe. If they feel like it, they can invite their friends to join them in their sanctuary. What's more, any pool owner can control the hygiene parameters themselves.

There's time, money and potential

The harder you work, the more luck you'll have? That may have been the case back in the 1800s. Today, we spend just 19 per cent of our lifetimes working. That leaves 30 per cent to spend how we like – plenty of time to enjoy a pool. And what about the financial side of things? There's some upbeat data on that from the German Federal Statistical Office: Personal savings in Germany have reached around 7 billion euros. Despite the pool boom in 2020 and 2021, almost 14 million out of a total 16 million owner-occupied houses in Germany still do not have a pool. This was one of the findings in a study conducted by the German Association for Swimming Pools & Wellness (bsw) and the market research institute B+L Marktdaten.

Another point worth noting: Research by the property portal immowelt has found that a swimming pool increases the value of a house by 13 per cent on average. So, investing money doesn't always have to be a "dry topic". Given the high rates of inflation, investing money in material assets is a smart move – and if it's invested in a pool, it will pay health dividends, too.

Nevertheless, some obstacles remain: The energy crisis, price rises and political decisions – these were the top responses from pool experts when they were asked about their biggest concerns for the latest bsw

economic barometer. aquanale is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that pools and wellness facilities can be energy-efficient and environmentally friendly – and a profitable investment, too. Innovative products presented under the banner of green swimming will show the private pool and wellness industry for what it is: genuinely committed to combining responsibility with pleasure.