

Water Park Report: Trends for the Summer Season

JUNE/JULY 2021

# Tourist Attractions & Parks

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## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

## Supplier and Operator Perspective: A Conversation with Sacoa's Sebastian Mochkovsky

**S**ebastian Mochkovsky, a third-generation veteran of the amusements industry, knows a thing or two about adapting to difficult situations. It was a lesson he learned early from his grandfather, Mauricio Mochkovsky, a Buenos Aires entrepreneur who in 1957 began operating pinball and jukebox attractions.

Hyperinflation during the years that followed prompted unscrupulous arcade employees to conceal tokens, waiting until their value had increased against the falling peso to exchange them — and cheating the business out of revenue. So the patriarch and his son and successor, Jorge, came up with a solution, replacing chips and tokens with cards that let customers perform direct transactions.

“From this, the Sacoa cashless system was born,” recalled Mochkovsky, 52. Today, Florida-based Sacoa — the multifaceted, privately held company he heads — is a leading supplier of revenue management systems to amusements and entertainment centers worldwide. Thousands of worldwide operators rely on the card system to maximize revenue, minimize dishonesty, and customize prices and user experience via an app. The family also operates more than a dozen entertainment centers in Argentina and a volcanic theme park in Ecuador and last December, Mochkovsky opened Dezerland Park Orlando, an 800,000-square-foot indoor amusement park.

Resilience, obviously, is in Mochkovsky's DNA. But the pandemic has challenged virtually every corner of the amusements and entertainment industry, including his. Sales in 2020 were down across the board at his businesses, a crisis that accelerated ongoing closures of Mochkovsky's Argentina properties.

Like his grandfather and father before him, Mochkovsky focused on solutions. “At any given time, there was always at least one center in operation somewhere in the world,” he noted. Elsewhere, Sacoa took advantage of slow periods to focus on training clients to use the cashless system, including online and mobile apps that allow patrons to book parties, recharge cards, and check balances. Temporary closures provided the opportunity to install upgrades and plan for more effective re-openings. Sacoa boasts that new clients can expect to see revenues increase by at least 20 to 30 percent once they convert from tokens or cash play, since the app allows owners to constantly adjust prices in response to demand and eliminates cashier cheating.

Indeed, Sacoa's card system is successful in no small part because it was developed by people with day-to-day knowledge of running amusements. A decade after Mochkovsky's grandfather installed his first jukeboxes, the family opened its first full-service bowling center

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*Sacoa CEO Sebastian Mochkovsky. The company counts more than 1,900 installations worldwide, with more than a billion cards sold in more than 70 countries.*

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*A Conversation with Sacoa's (From page 18)*

in the late 1960s in the Argentine city of Mar del Plata, where Mochkovsky was born.

Attractions included billiards and ping-pong, “because at the time, that was the technology we had available,” he laughed. Gradually, the family added an arcade with games like Space Invaders and Indy 500.

By the mid 1990s, a more stable Argentine government ushered in a period of economic optimism. The family introduced entertainment centers in cinemas and shopping malls: “Imagine in Walmart, an arcade with 50 to 60 games — optimized for the family experience, not just groceries,” Mochkovsky recalled. “We put bumper cars into theaters — things that just were not standard.”

At the same time, Sacoa’s card system was boosting the company’s competitive advantage. “Wherever we introduced it, revenue jumped through the sky,” Mochkovsky recalled. “In some locations, we doubled our revenue.”

Most of those attractions, which eventually numbered around 50, closed as Argentina went through a series of financial crises in the early 2000s. By then, the cashless system was becoming a bigger part of Mochkovsky’s portfolio. Manufacturing, originally in Argentina, now takes place in China and Taiwan. The proprietary software is still developed in Sacoa’s Buenos Aires office, and the company’s headquarters moved to Florida about 12 years ago.

Today, Sacoa supplies amusements around the world, with significant presence in North American markets. Mochkovsky counts more than 1,900 installations worldwide, with more than a billion cards sold in more than 70 countries.

As he looks at 2021 and beyond Mochkovsky sees persistent, ongoing challenges for the amusements in-



dustry. “As an operator, I think the pandemic effect will remain in Latin America and many other countries for another six months at the least,” said Mochkovsky. Populous nations with developing economies, such as India and the Philippines, remain a particular risk, he noted. “But the United States is a different animal,” said Mochkovsky, who has called Florida home for the past dozen years. “People here love freedom. They don’t want to be told by anyone to stay home, to follow a curfew.

“My concern is there’s a high risk of a second wave of the virus here. ...I see people on the beach, they don’t keep social distance, don’t wear a mask. They don’t care if they get sick. On the other hand, if we can vaccinate another 100 million people, that will be very positive,” Mochkovsky added.

Mochkovsky opened Dezerland Park Orlando last Christmas at a moment of extreme uncertainty — when much of the United States, including Florida, was reeling from viral caseloads and the vaccine had yet to become widely available. When he spoke to TAP in May, Mochkovsky admitted the park had failed to meet its original revenue targets in the first six months, but held out hopes for a summer bump. As an indoor venue, the Orlando Park offers an air-conditioned oasis during the brutal Florida summer.

To cope with challenging circumstances, Mochkovsky has taken advantage of government programs and raised prices to help offset rising labor costs. Five

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months after it opened, Dezerland Park Orlando raised its minimum wage from \$11 an hour — \$2 more than the state minimum — to \$15 an hour, a nearly 50 percent increase. Inflation and supply chain issues have also driven up the price of equipment; as an example, the chips used in everything from arcade games to debit machines have grown scarcer and therefore more expensive.

At his own company and throughout the industry, Mochkovsky said, “we will have to increase prices — that’s a fact.”

“It’s a real lottery, to say what will happen next,” he added. One may safely assume, however, that the Sacoa enterprise will respond to the challenges as it has in the past — with creativity, investment and an eye toward the future. 🌟

## News Briefs

### Sacoa Puts a Spotlight on Entertainment Activity Worldwide

Sebastian Mochkovsky, Sacoa CEO in USA, recently shared his experiences about what has happened in the industry in the recent months: “We have noticed a reactivation of the markets through the increase in the need to open new stores. COVID stopped generating that feeling of the necessity of lock-down,” he said.

In the last five months Sacoa cashless opened Dezerland Park Orlando, Fla. The attraction has an area of 800,000 square feet, and offers two indoor ekart tracks, 12 bowling lanes, a trampoline park and more than 250 machines. There are also 16 POS, 12 K4 Kiosks and the latest Spark card readers. The installation also included Online Sales, Online Party Booking, CRM modules and the Sacoa App to speed up sales. The cashless system also controls the access to the Orlando Auto Museum and the Pinball Palace.



*Sacoa cashless has opened Dezerland Park in Orlando, Fla. This 800,000-square-foot attraction offers a large array of entertaining activities.*

Additionally, In the Game, owned by George Smith, part of FEG, recently opened at Icon Park Orlando, with more than 60 machines using Spark readers, multiple K4 Kiosks, POS, and the Sacoa Redemption System.

And Magical Midway arcade in Orlando, owned by Dale Williams, replaced his previous card system for a Sacoa system. More than 70 Sparks, and the latest Sacoa software technology has being incorporated. Also Beach Fun and Games at Madeira Beach, Fla., just upgraded their old token system with 65 latest Spark readers, and all the software features.

On the same path is Australia, Spain, Egypt, and other countries over the world.

Sacoa is ready to help and support any center to go “back to normal” and forget this ugly moment in the history. 🌟