

Public-space TVs blend entertainment, angst

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Ah, the ubiquitous television. Sure, TVs are a requirement in guestrooms, but when it comes to public spaces, the decisions of where, how many, and even whether they should be placed there at all can cause angst.

Travis Murray, president of McNeill Hotel Co., said TVs are essential in “activating” a lobby. A great sporting event or a big news story can bring people into the lobby to root for their team or to discuss what’s happening. He added that, increasingly, many guests don’t want to work in their rooms but will come down to the lobby to work. “They enjoy the lobby atmosphere with background sounds, which keeps someone from getting bored in the room and helps energize a property,” Murray said.

Matthew Woodruff, executive VP, guest excellence, and chief brand partner officer, Hospitality Ventures Management Group, agreed that TVs play an important role in public spaces.

In the mornings, HVMG properties use TVs to inform by tuning the channels to various types of news, traffic or weather to start the day. In the evenings, the TVs transition to “relax/entertain” mode with a mix of sports, music or must-see programs. “The goal is to utilize TVs as one piece of the overall programming of the space, and success happens when you create an environment where guests want to leave their guestrooms and come down to experience the feel of the public spaces and your beverage and food offerings,” Woodruff said.

At HP Hotels, the TV question presents more of a conundrum. Jeff Burns, chief development officer, noted that HP Hotels considers aesthetics to be extremely important, and works hard to give

individual properties a unique, enticing look and feel. “As developers and designers, we spend a lot of time and energy designing our public spaces, especially today in the boutique field,” he said. “One may think that the last thing you would want to do is plop up a 50-inch TV over all your hard work.”

However, Burns added that the reality is that public spaces are communal gathering places, and many business travelers who visit HP’s hotels like to get caught up on the daily news. “This is a case where design can’t get in the way of consumer needs,” he said.

Mark Hemmer, president of Vesta Hospitality, noted that when purchasing TVs for public areas, it’s important to choose commercially rated TVs that can withstand near-constant use.

He said Vesta likes to replace TVs on a regular schedule, typically every seven years. “There are many benefits to doing this, including a better guest experience, a less reactive work environment for the team and consistency in the product,” Hemmer said.

This benefits both the hotel’s customers and the maintenance team that needs to support the TVs. “Having several different TV models to program and for which remotes are available can be a nightmare for the maintenance team and waste a lot of time,” he noted.

Murray offered a final piece of good TV-related advice in our divisive world: Try to avoid possibly controversial programs or content in public spaces. “Our hotels welcome guests from all walks of life, and it is part of our mission to respect that,” he said.

<https://www.hotelmanagement.net/operate/public-space-tvs-blend-entertainment-angst>