

## The Flatulence Cushion

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The body has certain physiological needs. One such need is for the body to expel gas (i.e., flatulence) created by the digestive system (i.e., malodorous gas). To deal with this need in public places (e.g., movie theatres, aeroplanes, trains), Magellan's, the travel supply company (<http://www.magellans.com>) at one time had a solution: the Flatulence Filter - an ordinary-looking cushion (with a handle) which contained an activated carbon air filter that absorbed the repugnant odours (i.e., malodorous gas) immediately. The absorption capability of the filter lasted up to 12 months. The cushion retailed for US\$39.85, plus shipping. Another company that offers a similar product is GasBGon (<http://www.gasbgon.com>). The cushion, which includes a sound dampening filter, as well as the odour control filter, retails for US\$24.95. Replacement filters sell for US\$7.95 to US\$21.95. Shipping is extra. For the "heavy end user," a second odour control filter can be inserted into the cushion.

**Focus:** Consumer behaviour; market segmentation, Maslow's hierarchy of needs; Freud's id, ego, super-ego; adoption process (stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, decision, confirmation); looking-glass self-image; VALS<sup>TM</sup> lifestyle segments (see <http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/presurvey.shtml> for survey and types), social norms; decision stages model (problem definition [actual state vs. desired state], product attribute cognizance, product evaluation, product decision, brand attribute cognizance, brand evaluation, brand decision, retailer attribute cognizance, retailer evaluation, retailer decision, post-decision cognizance); evaluative criteria; determinant criteria; weighted expectancy-value attitude model; perceived risk (economic, performance, physical, psychological, social); slice-of-life advertisement (formal, vertical communication channel).

### Questions:

1. Explain how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs applies to this situation.
2. Explain how Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego apply to this situation.
3. Explain how the adoption process applies to this situation.
4. Describe the demographic/psychological nature of a typical user of this product. Which lifestyle profile (VALS<sup>TM</sup>) would be the most consistent with the nature of the typical user of this product?

5. Explain how others would view a person who is seen carrying and using such a cushion.
6. Explain the thought processes a potential buyer would go through in making a decision to purchase such a product. Include in the explanation consideration of the following concepts: decision stages and intervening information processing model, evaluative criteria, determinant criteria, weighted expectancy-value attitude model, looking-glass self-image.
7. What kind of perceived risk would the customer/user face in making a purchase of the product and using the product? Explain.
8. What kind of thought process would be going through the mind of a person who purchased this product and who is about to test/use the product on board a flight?
9. How would you feel sitting beside someone with such a cushion during a long flight (e.g., Toronto [YYZ] to Dubai [DXB], a 13-hour, non-stop flight on United Arab Emirates Airline)?
10. Explain the nature of a “slice-of-life” ad that you would create for this product. Describe the script and storyboard for the ad. The setting for the ad is a flight showing three people (strangers) sitting side-by-side, with the Flatulence Cushion user in the middle.
11. Would you buy and use such a product? Why or why not?