

Pillow talk evolves

By **Jas Ryat** on July, 9 2018 | Fashion, Bags & Accessories



The new Evolution S3 offers upgrades like patent-pending headrest attachment straps that prevents one's head from falling forward, quick-dry fabrics, high quality memory foam, and a removable, washable cover

When Denz Vanderlist, International Sales Director at Cabeau, leads a product training session, the first thing he does is ask everyone to draw a travel pillow. Nine out of 10 draw the traditional U-shaped design. Then he explains: "There is no chair on an airplane, bus or train that has U-shaped seats. Chairs are straight." Enter Cabeau.

Travel pillows have come a long way from being an afterthought to a travel essential. Cabeau, a US-based company specializing in travel pillows, has reinvented the product based on consumer feedback of the traditional travel pillow. “Our product is customer-driven and customer-based. The feedback that Cabeau received from the travelers was that the existing model was not providing the functionality you expected. The ergonomics were not good. A person’s head could still fall side-to-side and forward,” says Vanderlist.

To come up with the current shape, Cabeau took the U-shaped pillow into airports, interviewed thousands of travelers and then designed a pillow that is consumer-driven.



Cabeau is changing the way travelers are looking at travel pillows. The travel pillow is emerging as an essential need while traveling, as opposed to an afterthought

Success through Evolution

Following the success of the Evolution pillow, Cabeau recently launched the new Evolution S3. The new product features improvements such as new patent-pending headrest attachment straps that prevents one’s head from falling forward, quick-dry fabrics, high quality memory foam, and a removable, washable cover. The travel bag for the pillow can be folded into has also improved. Again, this is based on consumer feedback, where Cabeau found that 77% of the travelers in our survey complain about neck pain while traveling.

The original Evolution pillow has become the Evolution Classic, offered in basic colors. Vanderlist explains: “The price of the Evolution pillow was US\$30. Because of product improvements, the price increased to US\$35 and eventually US\$40. With the quantities and slight adjustments made on

factory levels we can now bring the Evolution Classic back to US\$30 allowing us to offer a pillow at both price points.”

From want to need

The travel accessories channel has shifted and become more important. Everyone from the sophisticated business traveler to the occasional vacationer is finding the value in traveling in comfort, especially with many airlines minimizing seating area. Passenger numbers are growing, enabling Cabeau to strengthen and grow its business.

The US continues to be Cabeau’s strongest region given the fact that is where the company has started. Vanderlist describes the US as a “pillow country”, as many more travelers prefer pillows when traveling.

Following the US market, the Asian region is very strong for Cabeau. There is visible growth in countries like China, South Korea, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and India, he says.

Europe is starting to do well with the product. France is being seen as an emerging market and doors have opened in Germany, Poland, the Nordics, and Italy among others. Cabeau recently announced its first cruise ship partnership with Tallink, the leading operator in the northern Baltic Sea region, the brand’s first venture into the cruise sector.

Vanderlist was excited to say that “Many retailers are getting requests to carry Cabeau, and we’re getting many calls and emails from them which is always a great surprise for me.”

Life of Cabeau

Travel accessories respond to the trend for newness and innovation. “Our brand has become more fashionable over the years, as you can see in the recent change of brand image. There is consistent changing of images, color, and continuously updating the packaging. This keeps the product current. We are getting feedback from retailers and customers to improve our products, and our r&d and marketing team really focus on this,” notes Vanderlist.

The travel accessories category has grown so much in the past year that Vanderlist believes it should be its own category. "We would like to be an official category. Now we either fall under fashion accessories, gifts or electronics. What are we? We are in fact a key essential in impulse purchasing," he states. He highlights the fact that although passenger traffic is growing, penetration in stores is decreasing. Vanderlist reckons that with the right product and placement, retailers can increase conversion.

Meeting targets, achieving goals, building new relationships and strengthening existing ones with buyers are all key to Cabeau's success. Cabeau is already present in nearly 120 countries and the next step is diving deeper into tailored strategies with these partners. On a final note, Vanderlist concludes: "Listen to the market and adapt."