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Inflatable Cactus Review

My birthday decorations this year had the uncharacteristic (yet quite interesting) theme of cacti and llamas. The pivotal decoration was an [inflatable cactus balloon](#), . I placed it in my room. But, upon further review, is it really?

One factor of the design that I personally grapple with is the presence of barbs on inflatable cacti, a characteristic that mine lacks. On one hand, even fake, painted on barbs on a *inflatable* cactus that could pop if poked with something pointy seem ridiculous. On the other hand, barbs certainly make the cacti look more realistic. On yet another hand (I'll figure out the logistics of how I got a third one later), I think the barbs are funny due to their irony.

So although I have a slight preference for barbs after much thought on the subject, I don't truly have objections against the lack of them. Still, the design could be better. In lieu of barbs, my inflatable cactus has ovals in a lighter green placed evenly around the surface. This is better than nothing at all, but it isn't the best solution. As a matter of fact, it made the lack of barbs even more apparent than it might've been without the ovals. In looking at a plain cactus, I likely wouldn't have wondered about the lack of barbs at all; in looking at the ovals, the first question that came to my mind was "why aren't there any barbs?"

Although the design leaves much to be desired, there are several upsides. For example, the great majority of [inflatable cacti sold on Amazon](#) are designed as being in a flower pot. These

pots are not only unflattering in color but also in inspiration. When I look at a cactus in a pot, I can't feel the arid climate of the desert. When I look at a cactus in a pot, I can't imagine hopping off my camel to quench my thirst during a break on my journey along the [trans-Saharan trade route](#) in the 10th century. All I see is the perfectly manicured front lawn of an upper middle class family's beach house. Domesticated cacti are far less appealing.

Also, the material it is made of is better than that of inflatable cacti balloons, which many are. Those made out of balloon-type material appear too artificially shiny and crinkly, and evoke a sort of dollar store feeling. My cactus is firmer has a more defined shape, making it ideal.

There is something to be said as well about its longevity. At the time of writing, it has been nearly three weeks since it was first inflated, and it is still in good shape. That is far more than I can say about other similar products.

The quality of this inflatable cactus is quite good when the price is considered. It currently goes for [\\$6](#) on Target. On Amazon, the prices seem to range from about [\\$5-\\$12](#), meaning this cactus is near the bottom of pricing and still looks better than some of the more expensive ones. It also comes with a string, which can be used to hang the cactus up somewhere using the built-in holes. That is very convenient, especially for display purposes.

The placement of the arms on the cacti is also optimal. It has the traditional design of a cactus, having two arms that look the same on opposite sides of the cactus and one being raised slightly higher than the other.

However, I can see where there might be some criticism about how realistic the cactus is. There are no cacti in the wild that I can find that have the particular arms placement and design mentioned above. It is very likely this cactus was based off the [saguaro cactus](#), one of the most

famous species and the one that looks the most similar. The majority of saguaro cacti have more than two arms, and these arms tend to be at the same height or far apart, unlike the Target cactus's design.

But to those critics, I say: you're being far too nitpicky. You'd be hard-pressed to find a generic, cheap inflatable cactus that doesn't have the arms placed in that manner. In turn, they might say to me that I had commented on the realism of the cactus before (with the barbs and the pots). But to them, I say: those statements about the realism of the inflatable cactus were preoccupied with things that rather obviously show how true the cactus is to form. In other words, it only needs to be generically realistic, not realistic to the point of absolute accuracy to the species. As a matter of fact, I do believe that the opportunity to criticize the cactus and judge it by standards far too high for a party decoration is all part of what makes it fun to look at, as it lends itself to some nice sarcastic time-filling commentary.

Overall, this inflatable cactus could use some improvement but is much better than one would expect for its price. And I would argue that most people wouldn't care too much about the style of the cactus anyway, outside of making sure it isn't truly horrible. After all, it is just a party decoration, and people hold them to much lower standards than they would hold, perhaps, a painting of a cactus to. These decorations aren't meant to be overly analyzed, and that is truly its best quality. And seeing as it is one of the best looking cheap version, it is quite recommendable. If you are looking for a perfectly mediocre decoration, this inflatable cactus will be perfect for you.

Product Review Rules

To figure out the rules I should use to review my inflatable cactus, I looked at several reviews by Wired writer Christopher Null. I was able to use his reviews as a guideline of sorts for what information I specifically should include, though I'll admit I didn't take much stylistic elements from his writings (I would probably find the closest emulations in Amazon reviews, which are hardly the professional reviews that are recommended we take inspiration from). This is also an admittedly weak comparison since it was difficult to find reviews for things similar to an inflatable cactus (again, the best examples would probably be on Amazon). Still, I was able to gain some insight on what to write about and some strategies to use.

1. Write about how it compares to similar products

Comparison to similar products is valuable because it shows the reader if this product is better than others, which is one of the main components of the review: why should I buy this instead of another brand? Using direct comparisons of other brands not only gives potential buyers an idea of its strengths and weaknesses, it also gives them alternatives if the comparisons are not in favor of the product being reviewed. Null does this when reviewing the Asus ZenWatch 3, saying that it would be better in the end for people to just wait until the Android Wear 2 comes out.

2. Detail the different design elements and how well they work

Design is a very important component of reviews for products. Something might work well, but if it looks strange, less people will buy it. Design also extends to the way its made (meaning its convenience); something could look really good, but people might not buy it if its hard to handle. Null shows this when reviewing the OneBlade Pro, stating that while the design might seem

innovative at first it is unwieldy in practice. Whether talking about appearances or usefulness, design is an important factor to consider.

3. Use more personal language at some points

Using personal language (such as including “I” sentences) is a good strategy to use in a review. For one, it humanizes it, making people more likely to agree with you. Also, personal language lends itself well to talking about your personal experiences with the product, and that makes it clear to the reader that you know what you’re talking about, and haven’t just looked up other online reviews without even using the product. Null uses this as well, when he describes how he use the different stylers over a period of time to review them better, adding to his authority.

4. Consider the price as a factor in the review

Pricing is often an important part of product reviews. A product might be absolutely amazing, but if it is too expensive people will likely go to a cheaper but a lower quality version. A lot that goes into a review can be relative; something could be either good or bad for the price, and that will likely be a deciding factor for many people. It is simply unrealistic to expect everyone to buy the most expensive thing because it is the best; instead, most will look for a more moderately priced product that is still good. Null does this when reviewing the Gillette Styler, which he says is low cost but comes with compromises like a much smaller size and a normal, not rechargeable battery.

5. Investigate how well it lives up to expectations

Often, a product might bill itself as something without actually living up to it. This is an important factor to consider because people will want to know if they are getting what they are told they will. These expectations can also be customer expectations; some products people will

automatically think of as being lower quality, meaning they face lower scrutiny. Null does this when talking about the Asus ZenWatch 3, which he notes calls itself a smart watch but doesn't have enough smart features to live up to that.

<https://www.wired.com/story/mens-stylers-philips-norelco-braun-gillette-conair/>

<https://www.wired.com/2017/01/review-asus-zenwatch-3/>