



THE WAY I SEE IT by Genevieve Schmitt

## Why Not Sell Two Bikes Instead of One?

Sell more motorcycles by showing a woman in the saddle of her own bike

THE 2012 HARLEY-DAVIDSON THAT'S GETTING LOTS OF press this year is the brand-new Dyna Switchback, nicknamed Road Queen by many because it resembles a smaller, female-friendly Road King. I test rode the Switch-

back on an incredible five-day journey through northern New Mexico last autumn. I hadn't read any reviews or marketing materials on the bike, so I wasn't predisposed to others' viewpoints. However, one of my first observations after spending time in the saddle was that the Switchback felt like and looked like a mini Road King, an economically sized touring motorcycle that the seat-height and size-conscious woman rider would appreciate. A Road Queen, if you will.

Since the majority of my work in the motorcycling world focuses on women with my online magazine, WomenRidersNow.com, I'm super conscious of how motorcycling is marketed to women. So, after I had that thought, Road Queen, I envisioned a man and woman riding side by side, he on his Road King, she on her Road Queen ... uh ... Switchback. Could be a husband and wife, or boyfriend and girlfriend, or even a father and daughter, but each is riding their own motorcycle set up for touring, enjoying all the benefits that come from traveling long distances with a loved one.

Bam! That's an ad campaign! Why not? Sell more motorcycles by showing a woman in the saddle of her own bike. Why sell just one when you can sell two? Let's show a woman not on the back, but on the front. Makes sense right? Again, why sell one motorcycle when you can sell two?

Well, can you believe I've yet to see such an advertising campaign in the nearly 20 years I've been observing

this industry? Last I checked, motorcycle manufacturers want to sell motorcycles — uh, lots of them — and in this down economy, it would appear that including the nation's most influential gender (that'd be women) in that advertisement would make sense.

Yes, a woman controls 85 percent of her household's purchasing decisions, and she holds the majority weight in traditionally male-dominated consumer decisions like home electronics and home improvement. Unfortunately, motorcycle purchases are never polled in these national surveys, but we do know from experience that in a healthy relationship, often one spouse seeks approval from the other in high-dollar purchases, that'd be a motorcycle.

Let's go a step further. If the woman is even remotely interested in riding — and I can tell you there are a lot of women who have a secret desire to dress in black leather and ride a motorcycle, but haven't a clue how to make that happen — addressing a woman in an advertisement would have relevance. Since the majority of purchasers of motorcycles are men, and many are married or involved in a relationship, the smart marketing person would try to sell not one motorcycle, but two. So an ad campaign positioning a man and woman riding side by side would seem to make sense.

There's always the argument that men want to be men out on the road without their woman with them — they need their "man time" away from family obligations — so showing a cou-

ple riding side by side is contrary to attracting men to exercise their man time through motorcycling. I get that. However, I think most men are smart enough to see through an ad with a couple riding when he actually wants to ride alone or with his buddies. The couple ad doesn't emasculate the riding experience. But the addition of the woman rider indicates possibilities. If he's single, maybe he can find a biker babe to ride with him. If he's in a relationship, the ad shows that women like to ride, too, and that it's possible to involve his woman in the activity.

Am I missing something here? Awhile back, I asked an advertising person why there are no such "couples" ads, and I was told it was because of money. When ad dollars are limited, companies can only produce so many campaigns. And they're usually targeting their largest market segment, so that would mean leaving women out of the picture. But, I say, what about influence? We know when a woman participates in an activity she loves, she shares it with at least 10 friends. Wow! I can't tell you how many women I've encouraged to ride over the years. I do tip my hat to Harley-Davidson, the only manufacturer to run ads featuring women riders. Hooray! Haven't seen that "couples" ad, but Harley's outreach to women is robust, and the number of women buying Harley-Davidsons exceeds any other manufacturer.

Many couples over the years have shared with me how motorcycling literally saved their marriage. With divorces on the rise, how about an ad entitled "The Best Marriage Therapy." Saving marriages and selling more motorcycles! It doesn't get better than that!

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