

# We're Spending Money Again, So The Survey Says

IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW AGGRESSIVELY motorcycle dealerships go after our business now that we're opening our wallets again. According to the latest customer satisfaction survey conducted by J.D. Power and Associates, we're

spending more money on motorcycles, parts, and accessories, and the overall ownership experience has improved from 2010 to 2011. The annual survey measures owner satisfaction in six major areas: product, build quality, cost of ownership, sales, service, and warranty.

"The increase in overall satisfaction and the improvements in five of the six factors are very positive news for the industry, which is still trying to fully recover from the blow the economy has delivered in recent years," said Brent Gruber, senior manager of the powersports and commercial vehicle practice at J.D. Power and Associates. "Improving the quality of motorcycles, as well as the sales and service experience, certainly positions the manufacturers and their dealerships well for market recovery."

The study found that motorcycle build quality improved, with half of owners saying they have experienced zero problems with their new motorcycle. Among the five problem categories examined in the study, problems with engines account for the greatest proportion of problems experienced, although the incidence of engine-related problems improved slightly in 2011. Problems with excessive heat, unusual noises, and excessive vibration account for 51 percent of all reported engine-related problems. Issues with fit/finish comprised the second largest proportion of problems, followed by problems with braking/ride.

The average owner-reported price paid in 2011 was \$16,125, nearly \$2,000 higher than in 2010. On average, owners spent an additional \$1,340 on parts and accessories and \$439 on riding gear, considerably more than in 2010.

The study found that as satisfaction increased, the likelihood that an owner will repurchase his motorcycle brand and recommend his brand to others also increases. Among owners with high levels of satisfaction, 97 percent said they were willing to recommend their motorcycle brand to others and 81 percent indicated intent to repurchase the same brand for their next motorcycle. In contrast, among owners

who were less satisfied, only 43 percent say they would be willing to recommend their brand to others, and 31 percent indicate repurchase intent.

Women are still a force to be reckoned with, controlling 85 percent of a family's household spending. Convince mom to ride either on the front or back seat, and she's more than likely to grant permission to a spouse's or child's interest

in getting on two wheels. The Garage Party concept that Harley-Davidson started seven years ago was a boon with thousands of women being turned on to motorcycling because local dealers chose to hold these women-only "introduction to motorcycling" dealership events. I applaud the shops that are going above and beyond in throwing these parties. It gets people in the door who otherwise may not have thought about

walking into a motorcycle dealership.

Women riding motorcycles is at an all-time high; we've never seen this many women riding on the front seat of a motorcycle. Now is the time for dealers to engage their existing female customers by inviting them in for women-only seminars at the dealership and insisting that their ticket in be a non-

riding female friend. Look at the Garage Party concept and modify it to fit your customer base. Garage Parties are basically a motorcycling 101 event. That's nice for non-riders, but what about existing riders? Holding a basic motorcycle maintenance class is a way to get existing riders in the door, spending a few hours at the dealership and hopefully opening up their wallet. Not convinced you should be targeting women? Think about engaging your existing male customer base. Invite the guys in for a basic motorcycle maintenance class. Dealers: think about those "out-of-the-box" ideas that make you stand out from the competition. Customers are back and are willing to spend some money. What are you doing to make sure they walk through your door?

The J.D. Power and Associates US Motorcycle Competitive Information Study is now in its 14th year, and the 2011 results are based on responses from 8,123 owners who purchased their new motorcycle between September 2010 and May 2011. The study was conducted between September and October 2011. **AIM**

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