

APPAREL PRO: BOOTS

In terms of motorcycle protective apparel, boots are often the least thought of apparel item. Apparel reviews abound on helmets, jackets, pants and race suits, but why is it that we never hear much about footwear given that riding shoes and boots are generally the one thing we wear all day without removing when in the saddle for long distances? The good news is that with the right approach this often overlooked-by-consumers item represents an income opportunity for your dealership.

Shoes? Sexy? Heck yeah. You can never have enough, even for motorcycling. Just look at any fashion magazine - men's or women's - and you'll see Americans love footwear. Bring that consciousness to your displays, and sales staff, and it's a winning combination. After 20+ years of riding, I myself have quite the collection of boots. No longer satisfied with one pair for many purposes, I have several styles depending on the type of riding I plan on doing. Don't think that it's just because I'm a woman, either. My male partner has more boots than I do.

I don't go into a dealership looking for boots, however. Boot purchases seem to find their way to me, and that's where the careful nudges from a knowledgeable salesperson come in. Overall, I feel like I have enough boots for all my riding disciplines, but with the current advancements in materials technology and designs, there's always an opportunity to upsell me into something I find exciting or didn't know existed. Knowledgeable, engaged dealership personnel are the bane of my pocketbook.

I'm not talking about fashion, either. Extra padding and armor is always appealing, so is all-day comfort. Combine those with purpose-built technology, and you'll probably get me to open my wallet. Because I am hard on equipment, and because we use our booted feet on and off the bike, there's always the lure of replaceable parts. Entice me with a well-constructed pair of boots with replaceable parts so I can refresh them without buying a whole new pair, and I'll be your customer for life.

Bates Footwear recently entered the motorcycle scene. Originally a dress-shoe manufacturer, you can see elements of the company's success since 1885 in its current designs: comfort while walking, an extension of your protection while on the bike, with a goal of looking good. BMW Motorrad entered the marketplace a while ago with its version of "riding sneakers," and Highway 21 is offering some standard-issue cruiser boots. If serving male or female customers, you can hardly go wrong with Joe Rocket's lineup of footwear.

If you're wondering what's in my closet, right now it's a pair of Daytona Touring Boots, Sidi Traffic Air, TCX Air Tech Gore-Tex Boots, Alpinestars SMX Plus vented boots, Forma Terrain TX boots and a pair of BMW Motorrad Enduro Boots. To my point: Julie McCauley, marketing manager at Bates Footwear, summed it up nicely when she said, "If [dealers] have the right choices, and the salesperson knows how to sell footwear, it's an easy add-on sale." ↙

