

APPAREL PRO: VINTAGE & RETRO

While the motorcycle industry thrives on new bike sales, it's a lot of fun to watch the resurgence of interest in the older, vintage bikes. Driven in large part by the hipster market, which is huge in several unlikely markets across the United States, I see lots of opportunities for dealers to profit from the resurrection of these old bikes. Most specifically in the lifestyle accoutrement that, of necessity, goes with owning a vintage motorcycle.

The right accessories to riding one of these machines is vital. Beyond rearsets and clip ons, looking the part is absolutely essential to these riders. Some folks even think of it as a uniform so to speak. It's not just about matching their apparel to the bike, however. These stylistic influences are blending out from this genre of motorcycling and gently influencing PG&A in other categories as well.

"This style movement harkens back to a specific – and perhaps simpler – time and social scene," said Jamie Goodson, owner of Brooks Leather Sportswear. "This old-school traditional style started with the earlier British motorcycles. Back then we were all into it. At seventeen I had a BSA Rocket Gold Star. We were avid fans of road racing and I wanted to imitate that style."

Vintage clothing from the 1950s and 1960s is hot right now on the street fashion scene, and it's increasingly popular in the motorcycle scene. Sales of three-quarter helmets have soared in the last couple of years, and traditional leather jacket sales have ramped up as well. Sales of the older, high quality leather jackets like Schott, Vanson and Brooks tell the story that these styles stick around and that their quality is appreciated.

"The truth is that consumers know if something is high quality. At Brooks we have a tremendous following of riders. Our customers are 'in the know' and like the fact that we're 'Made in the USA.' We make these jackets so that they last a lifetime, sometimes many lifetimes by the way that they are passed down from generation to generation like heirlooms. People who know about this type of quality really appreciate it," said Goodson.

One of the advantages of cultivating these types of apparel sales is that consumers see these retro jackets as multifunctional pieces of apparel and therefore a good value. They have the cool factor on and off the bike and easily morph into lifestyle pieces for around town use. Companies such as Brooks with the added value of being made in the USA have particular appeal these days.

There are several ways for your dealership to tap into this market. The vintage motorcycling scene is rather like a club, so promoting that type of atmosphere in your shop is one way to hook in. Going to rallies, especially sponsoring them is a great way to keep your staff involved and rubbing elbows with your customers. Vintage and retro is a lifestyle thing – it's more than just transportation for the folks into this genre of bike so meet your customers on their level. Let them see you're the real deal just like those enthusiasts in the '50s and '60s. ↙



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