



MOTO LIBERTY: EVERYTHING IS BIGGER IN TEXAS

By Alisa Clickenger

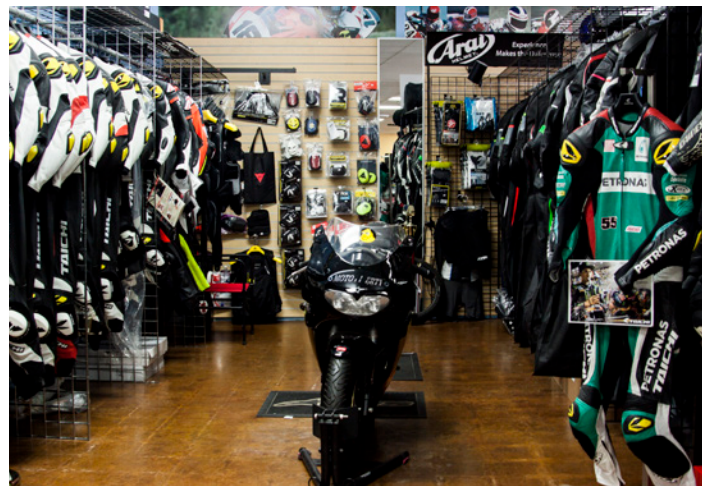
Everything's bigger in Texas, so it's a fitting place for Audrey Menarik and her supersized heart for the motorcycle industry to take up shop. Store, to be more precise, as she is the owner – and powerful marketing maven – behind Moto Liberty in Dallas, Texas. Frequented by all types of riders, the retail store is a destination unto itself for both the quality of their customer service as well as their vast selection of moto clothing.

Voted the number one gear store in the state by *Ride Texas* magazine, the successful operation was launched in 1987. The original Moto Liberty was very involved in road racing and import/export of motorcycles and parts. Menarik purchased the assets in 1999 and went solo with her own gear store in a small 1,500 square foot “odd little store,” as she describes it, on the second floor of a two story building. She kept expanding by adding 750 sq./ft. suites one at a time until moving into the new store on Lyndon B Johnson Freeway six years ago. Moto Liberty now consists of more than 6,000 square feet of retail space.

There are very few operations in the country like Moto Liberty, and the list of things they don't do is in some ways longer than the things they do. They don't sell bikes, they don't service bikes, and they don't even change tires. Moto Liberty solely focuses on retail sales, specializing in protective gear for motorcyclists (with a handful of accessories thrown in).

What's the trick to remaining the number one motorcycle apparel store in the Lone Star State? Menarik keeps a tip-top team of professionals on staff, preferring to pay straight salaries rather than commissions so she can make sure their customers get the awesome service she thinks they deserve. “I would say the number one thing is an educated sales staff that really and sincerely cares about putting people in the appropriate gear for their riding needs,” she explains

“I am extremely fortunate to have a wonderful crew. Even with the youngsters that I have in here I don't have to do much to motivate them at all. The entire crew is self-motivated. Any time there's a rep that will come in and talk to them, they want to sit down and learn everything they



can. If there's a showcase in town, they'll go on their own time. Even if it's bad timing, or if they're tired, they still want to go. They aren't your typical 20-30 year olds."

With a business mentality that doesn't seek to define itself in solely one area, Moto Liberty is also the exclusive U.S. distributor for the RS Taichi brand of racing leathers and technical riding gear. Effectively, Menarik runs two businesses, yet still has the creative thinking capacity to cook up great events for both the store and successful distribution of the high-end Japanese brand.

Moto Liberty hosts a Midnight Madness sale once a year and they bring in live bands, feed everybody lunch, and offer free barbecue food and fixins. It's a very good revenue generator for them and the event gets a lot of foot traffic through the store. On Easter, Menarik organizes an Easter egg hunt where they hide eggs all over the store that have discount coupons and free prizes inside. Menarik knows it's silly, but states that it's one of the most fun events of the year for her. The store also happens to triple its sales that day as well.

In fact, Moto Liberty is widely known for their event marketing. "I make up all kinds of things for Halloween, too, but I never try to compete with holidays like Labor Day or Memorial Day or President's Day," says Menarik. And I never try to compete with other retailers on big holidays like that. I also never do anything big for black Friday. People are out doing other stuff."





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It's not all bluebonnets and barbeques for the 6,000 foot store, however. Menarik is realistic about the state of retail and the challenges of running a brick and mortar store in the era of next day delivery. "I don't sit around and wait for customers to walk through my door. I'm out there doing everything I can to jumpstart business," says Menarik.

At the end of last year she doubled down and took a serious look at the industry. The adventure market is the one segment experiencing growth, so Menarik started calling around to some of her dealer buddies and asked them if they'd be interested in participating in a motorcycle show targeted towards that segment of the industry. They all jumped on board. The payoff for the 34 vendors was more than 1,000 cash-paying customers coming through the doors. (See ADV Show sidebar)

"Part of the reason I did that show is I wanted to see if I could make it a success to stimulate the local motorcycle community and it worked," said Menarik. "I also wanted this show to serve as a template for other cities. I think I proved that it can work in Dallas and I really hope somebody else will take up the reins doing things that make people want to go back to shopping in retail stores rather than clicking & ordering."

What's next in Menarik's bag of retail tricks? In February Moto Liberty is hosting a mini version of the ADV show at

the store. This event she's going to have reps on hand from camping suppliers like Big Agnes and Nikwax so people can learn how to take care of their high-end gear and make it last longer. They've invited all the dealers that displayed at the December show to bring a couple of bikes over and park them out in front on the sidewalk like a pop-up dealership event right there at her store.

It's just this type of innovation and industry-wide cooperation that could possibly be the big wave of salvation for retail in the post online shopping era. And leading that great movement will no doubt be Menarik and Moto Liberty doing something grand. After all, everything's bigger in Texas. 

Dealer Principal: Audrey Menarik

Size: 6,000 sq./ft.

Established: 1999

Franchises: NONE



Moto Liberty

2821 Lyndon B Johnson Fwy Suite 110

Dallas, TX 75234

(972) 243-5995 or (800) 214-RACE

<https://motoliberty.com>

