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Powersports faring worse than auto industry with online shoppers

Powersports Business

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The motorcycle industry is faring far worse than the auto industry in reaching Internet shoppers in a timely manner, according to studies conducted by the company behind the 2008 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index.

When motorcycle dealerships were contacted by e-mail or over the Internet, only 30 percent of them responded to shoppers within 24 hours.

In contrast, a separate study, also done by Pied Piper Management Co., shows 72 percent of auto dealers replied to shoppers' e-mails within 24 hours.

For those motorcycle dealers that did respond to e-mails, on average six hours occurred between when they received the shopper's e-mail to when they actually replied. In the auto industry, it's almost half that time (3.5 hours).

"It's a double whammy," said Fran O'Hagan, president of Pied Piper Management Co., the California-based company behind the Prospect Satisfaction Index. "Not only are the motorcycle dealers far less likely to respond, but even those that do respond take twice as long to."

In their e-mail responses, motorcycle dealers also fail to provide reasons to buy from their dealerships far more often than their auto industry counterparts (32 percent vs. 41 percent).

The Prospect Satisfaction Index also found what appears to be conflicting policies regarding giving price quotes to shoppers over the phone. On average, 77 percent of dealerships provide prices over the phone. However, the average varies greatly by brand: 88 percent of Honda dealers provide price quotes while only 53 percent of Buell dealers do it.

"It's very clear there are an awful lot of customers use the phone or the Internet as a piece of their shopping process," O'Hagan said. "So if for some reason a dealer feels that they don't need to give a price quote over the phone, they better be awfully compelling in providing reasons why the shopper should stop by the dealership."

Other sales processes over the phone also differ greatly by brands. On average, 57 percent of dealers' sales staffs encouraged the shopper on the phone to visit the dealership. But that number is nearly 70 percent for Harley-Davidson and less than 50 percent for KTM.

Overall for the industry, 38 percent of shoppers are asked over the phone for their contact information. But again that number is vastly different by brand, with Ducati being at 47 percent and KTM at 24 percent.