



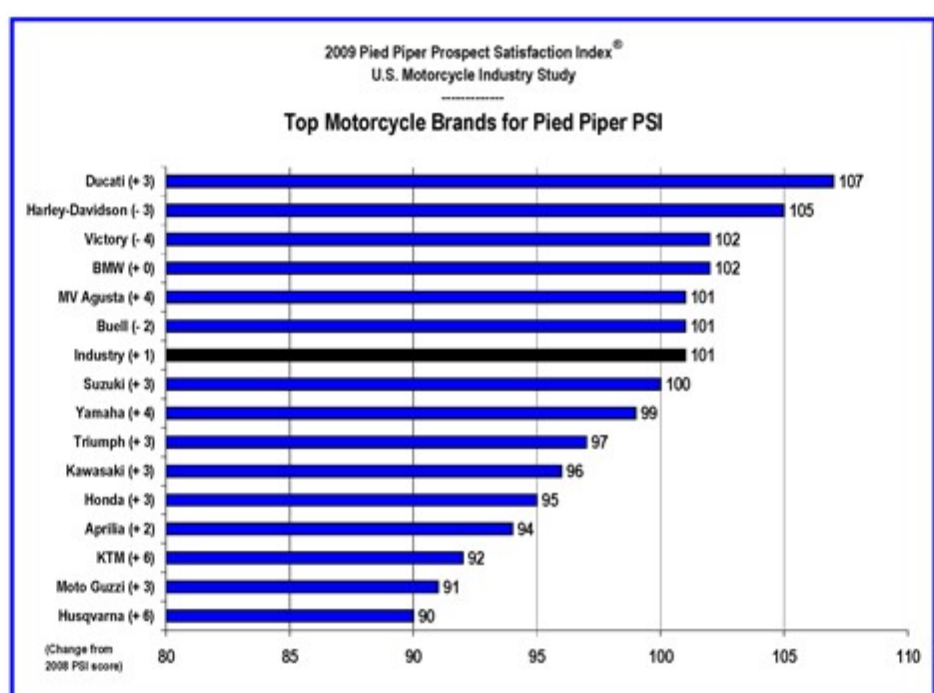
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SEARCH

Pied Piper Study: Customer Service Improves

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Motorcycle salespeople on average asked prospective customers for their contact information only 45 percent of the time during a recent nine-month period, according to the 2009 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index study. Sounds bad, right? But it's actually an improvement over the previous year's study in which salespeople asked only 38 percent of time. Dealership staff members seem to be improving in other areas as well, the study reported.

Conducting the research was California-based Pied Piper Management Co., a five-year-old research company that, in addition to its main work in the automotive industry, provides sales-and-marketing consulting services to Honda, Ducati, Victory and individual dealerships. It says it hired 2,100 professional secret shoppers to visit 844 dealerships nationwide between July 2008 and March 2009.

Pied Piper has done the study three years in a row. In 2007 the company hired secret shoppers to visit 375 dealerships during a much shorter period: between November 2006 and January 2007. That year (as in every year since) shoppers filled out a survey of more than 50 yes-or-no questions and wrote comments. Pied Piper collected all the information, weighted the value of each yes/no question according to a proprietary system, weighted the value of each OEM by sales volume, then set the industry average to 100, ranking each brand in relation to it.

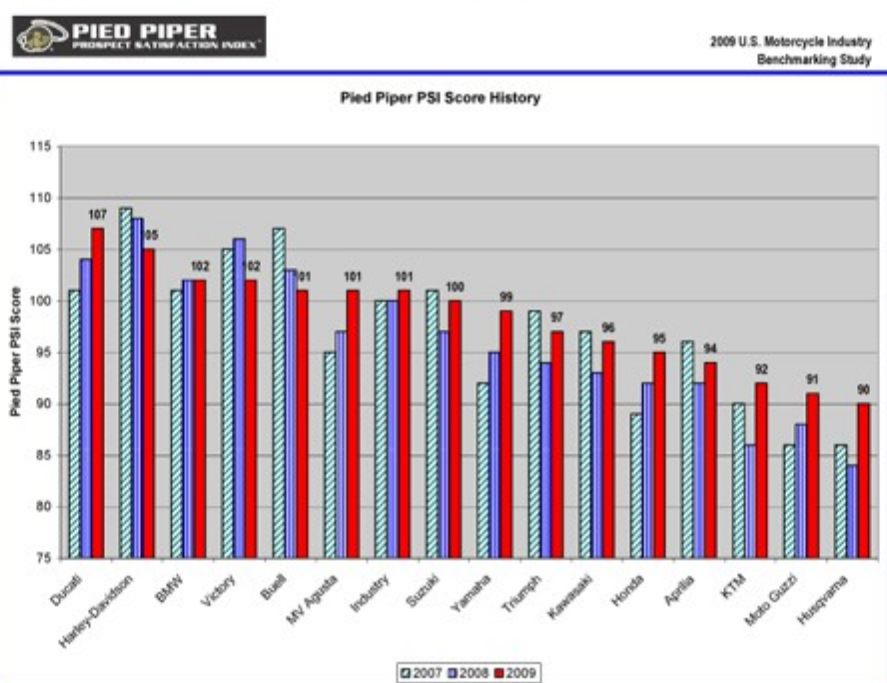
Last year, Pied Piper hired people to secret-shop 830 dealerships between July 2007 and March 2008 (the same months as this year). The industry average did not change in relation to the previous year.

This year, the industry average did increase a bit, to 101 in relation to the 2007 average. The OEMs also moved around in the rankings. See the bar chart below for details on all three years.

In a press release announcing the 2009 study, Pied Piper noted the following:

- Overall motorcycle industry performance improved from 2008 to 2009, with 11 of the 15 major brands achieving higher PSI (Prospect Satisfaction Index — what the company calls the scores in relation to the 2007 average).
- Ducati dealers led all brands in 30 percent of sales process factors evaluated by the study, including the ability to answer product questions, offering test rides, offering brochures and asking for the sale.
- Harley-Davidson dealers held on to the highest ranking for 20 percent of the sales process factors, including taking time to determine how a motorcycle will be used, and addressing features and benefits specific to the prospect's wants and needs.
- Buell, BMW, MV Augusta and Victory each led multiple sales process areas.
- BMW salespeople ranked first for greeting prospects promptly, for making the special order process easy, and for mentioning the availability of accessories.
- In comparison with the previous year's results, motorcycle salespeople were 11 percent more likely to introduce themselves, 8 percent more likely to ask follow-up questions, and 13 percent more likely to encourage a prospect to sit on a bike.
- Dealers who improved their PSI scores by 10 percent or more from 2007 to 2008 on average saw their retail sales increase 9 percent during the same time period, while dealers for whom PSI dropped by 10 points or more on average saw their retail sales drop 6 percent over the same time period.
- Dealerships whose salespeople asked for contact information at least two-thirds of the time retained 29 percent more motorcycles than those who did not.
- Dealerships whose salespeople offered test rides at least three-quarters of the time retained 43 percent more motorcycles than those who did not.
- On average, motorcycle salespeople offer test rides only 23 percent of the time.

Dealers can pay Pied Piper to secret-shop their own store. The cost is \$99 per salesperson evaluation, and the information is collected and viewed using a Web-based program. Learn more at www.piedpiperpsi.com.



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