

## **Harley-Davidson Marketing**

Harley Davidson has been in business since 1903. According to the website, “four young men experimented with internal combustion in a tiny wooden shed. Not only does the shed not burn, but the motorcycle they build goes on to serve for over 100,000 miles” (Harley Davidson, n.d., 1). In 1901, William S. Harley draws a blueprint of a motor to fit a bicycle. Later, he is joined by Arthur Davidson and they build the first Harley Davidson motorcycle. Harley Davidson has excess demand for its products. Its products include motorcycles, accessories, and apparel. It is the only U.S. born motorcycle manufacture. Its website provides the internet user, or motorcycle enthusiast, with interesting, useful, and visual information on its products and services. Harley Davidson’s market niche is a wealthy or above average income individual. Many of their buyers are older adults who like to ride for relaxation.

Harley Davidson uses customer surveys and motorcycle rallies to conduct their marketing research. This research has influenced Harley to start to manufacture motorcycles for women. Women riding motorcycles has increase 10% since 1987. On their website, Harley has a separate web page for women riders. On this page, topics include why women ride, learning to ride, women riders making headlines, and the history of female riders (Harley Davidson, n.d.).

Harley Davidson appeals to consumers through brand identity. “The value of brands in today’s environment is phenomenal. Brands have the power of instant sales, they convey a message of confidence, quality and reliability to their target market” (Learn Marketing, n.d., 2). Everybody recognizes the bar and shield symbol of a Harley Davidson. Owning a Harley Davidson motorcycle signals American pride, and depending on what type of motorcycle the individual has it could also signal wealth. Harley Davidson’s target market can be subdivided

into smaller niches. These niches include the motorcycle itself, fashion, charity runs, the Harley Davidson Owners Group (also known as H.O.G.), and social events. Harley Davidson has chosen the strategic direction of targeting a younger market. With the introduction of the V-Rod motorcycle, Harley Davidson is trying to capture the performance cruiser marketplace. "To target the younger market with the new product line, the company has adopted the following marketing objectives: to expand its current market (market expansion), diversify its product line (product diversification), and modify its marketing mix to target a younger demographic" (Thompson, 2006). Currently, Harley Davidson's marketing mix consist of riders in the age group of 35 – 44. Harley Davidson is trying to gain a new mix of motorcycle riders. They are aiming for younger riders with the introduction of the V-Rod. If they obtain this new marketing mix, they will control the American motorcycle industry.

Other marketing strategies Harley Davidson uses is that it is cheaper on gas. Their slogan is "Live to Ride." Also, they create an image by telling consumers that while riding one of their bikes it relieves a lot of stress. Since Harley has a huge recognizable brand image, this gives the Harley motorcycle a favorable resell value. Many motorcyclist treat their Harley's as investments. I own a Harley myself, and I do think it is an investment. I know if I decide to sell my motorcycle I would get a nice return on my investment. After all, Harley cannot build the motorcycles fast enough to keep up with demand. Harley also uses their website as a marketing strategy. The website provides a means of communicating with all of the riders and soon to be riders. It is a way to stay connected to Harley and the Harley mystique. The most important aspect of understanding the functionality of the marketing plan is the feedback involved from the consumer. "To comprehend why or why not a certain aspect of the marketing mix is working, consumers of the product must be allowed to give their input" (Thompson, 2006, 5). Continual and efficient uptake of data from the customer, whether

through surveys or questionnaires or any other technique is critical in order to see whether the marketing plan implemented is working accordingly as planned.

## References

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