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The Role of Customer Service and Promotions in Shaping Consumer Preferences for Motorcycle Accessories

Pacharasut Sujarittanonta^a

Abstract

With nearly ten percent of the world's motorcycles in use in Thailand, the country represents a significant market for motorcycle accessories. This pilot qualitative research seeks to explore consumer insights using completion techniques, specifically sentence completion and story completion. Three respondents were selected through accidental sampling, recruited as they entered a motorcycle accessory shop. The respondents, all male and at least 15 years old, completed questionnaires that aimed to uncover their perceptions, preferences, and motivations regarding motorcycle accessories. This study provides preliminary insights into consumer behavior in Thailand's large and growing motorcycle accessory market. This research was conducted in a motorcycle accessory shop located in the Northeastern part of Thailand, an area selected due to its conducive environment for conducting such studies. The story completion test results revealed that all participants were willing to participate in a promotion offering a ten percent discount to membership card holders. Additionally, it was found that the participants had visited the motorcycle accessory shop based on recommendations from friends, reflecting the strong influence of positive word-of-mouth in shaping their purchasing decisions. This highlights the importance of social influence and promotions in attracting customers to the shop. Furthermore, the research revealed that consumers highly value the knowledge and assistance provided by sellers, particularly when it comes to receiving advice on which motorcycle accessories would best suit their needs. This personal interaction significantly enhances customer satisfaction, as it ensures that buyers feel supported in their purchasing decisions. Equally important is the provision of quality after-sales service, which reassures consumers that they can rely on the shop for continued support, fostering long-term customer loyalty and repeat business. These factors indicate that customer service and relationship management play a crucial role in the motorcycle accessory market, alongside the products themselves. However, it is important to recognize that this study was merely a pilot qualitative research project, conducted to provide initial insights and serve as a foundation for more comprehensive future studies. The limited sample size, consisting of only three respondents, means that the results, while useful for exploratory purposes, are not representative of the broader market. Therefore, to improve the validity and generalizability of the findings, future research should involve a significantly larger sample size. Expanding the sample would allow researchers to capture a more accurate reflection of consumer behavior, preferences, and market dynamics across different regions and demographics. In addition, while qualitative research methods such as completion techniques are useful for gaining deep insights into consumer psychology and motivations, the inclusion of quantitative research is highly recommended for future studies. Quantitative research, involving a larger number of participants, would provide a more statistically reliable analysis of consumer trends, preferences, and behaviors. This approach would be especially valuable when studying a few hundred or more accessory buyers, enabling researchers to identify key patterns and correlations that can guide marketing strategies and product development in the motorcycle accessory market. By combining qualitative insights with quantitative data, future studies could offer a more comprehensive understanding of consumer needs and expectations. This would allow businesses in the motorcycle accessory industry to develop more targeted marketing campaigns, refine their product offerings, and improve customer service strategies, ultimately leading to increased sales and stronger customer relationships. Moreover, such research could help identify emerging trends and opportunities within the market, further positioning businesses to stay ahead of the competition in an ever-evolving industry. While this pilot study provides valuable preliminary insights, future research with a larger and more diverse sample size, as well as a quantitative approach, is essential to fully understand the complexities of consumer behavior in the motorcycle accessory market. This combination of research methods would not only validate the current findings but also provide actionable data that can help businesses thrive in a competitive landscape.

Keywords: Motorcycle Accessories, Consumer Behavior, Thailand

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1. INTRODUCTION

Motorcycles are the most common type of motor vehicle globally, with an estimated 200 million in use worldwide, making them one of the most affordable and accessible forms of transportation, especially in many developing regions (Wikipedia, 2011). Historically, during the 1950s, the United States accounted for approximately half of the global motorcycle market (Benjamin, 1993). However, in recent years, the motorcycle industry in the US and Europe has experienced a decline (Valera, 2011). Today, Asia has emerged as the dominant market, with 65% of the world's mopeds and motorcycles being used in the region (Worldmapper, 2011). This shift underscores the growing importance of

^a Department of International Business, Faculty of Business Administration, Providence University, Taiwan

motorcycles in Asian countries, where they serve as essential vehicles for everyday commuting and goods transportation due to their affordability and efficiency in navigating congested urban areas. Motorcycles are an integral part of daily life in Southeast Asia, where they serve not only as affordable transportation but also as essential vehicles for navigating congested urban areas and rural regions. According to Minh et al. (2012), motorcycles dominate vehicular traffic in Southeast Asia. For instance, in Singapore, 16.3% of all vehicles are motorcycles (Haque et al., 2012), making them a significant portion of the transportation infrastructure. In Thailand, motorcycles are even more prevalent, with over 17 million motorbikes on the roads as of November 2010 (ThaiWebsite, 2011b). In Vietnam, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City, motorcycles account for over 80% of all vehicular traffic, further demonstrating their critical role in transportation (Minh et al., 2012). The reliance on motorcycles in these countries reflects broader regional trends, where economic factors, urbanization, and dense populations drive the need for cost-effective, agile vehicles capable of maneuvering through traffic and rural terrains.

The motorcycle market in Thailand showcases a diverse array of brands competing for dominance, with Honda firmly positioned as the market leader. In May 2011, Honda sold an impressive 132,868 units, capturing a staggering 71% of the total market share (Chinamotor, 2011). Yamaha followed with 43,767 units, accounting for 23% of the market, while Suzuki held 3% of the market with 6,460 units sold. Other brands like Kawasaki sold 2,500 units, and Thailand's local manufacturer, Tiger, sold 207 units, with smaller brands like JRD contributing 19 units. The remaining sales, amounting to 1,746 units, were attributed to various other brands (Chinamotor, 2011). This dominance of a few key brands in Thailand's motorcycle market is indicative of global trends, where large, established manufacturers like Honda and Yamaha continue to lead due to their reputation for reliability, innovation, and strong after-sales support. Honda, the world's leading motorcycle producer (Benjamin, 1993), continues to benefit from its long-standing presence in the region, while Yamaha's performance highlights the competitive nature of the market. Smaller players like Suzuki and Kawasaki hold niche positions, catering to specific segments of consumers, such as those looking for sportier or higher-performance models.

With nearly 10% of the world's motorcycles in use in Thailand, the country has evolved into a major hub for the motorcycle accessories market. The sheer volume of motorcycles in Thailand creates a substantial demand for accessories such as helmets, protective gear, parts, and customization options, further driving economic activity in this sector. The high usage rates of motorcycles across the country mean that consumers are continually seeking upgrades, repairs, and enhancements to their vehicles, contributing to a thriving market for motorcycle accessories. The market for accessories is fueled by both practical needs—such as replacing worn-out parts or improving safety—and lifestyle preferences, as many riders seek to personalize their motorcycles with unique designs and modifications. The importance of Thailand's motorcycle market extends beyond domestic consumption. The country's robust demand for motorcycles and accessories makes it a crucial player in the global motorcycle industry, attracting investments from international manufacturers and suppliers. Thailand's strategic location in Southeast Asia positions it as a gateway for motorcycle trade and distribution to neighboring countries, further amplifying its role in the regional and global market. As the motorcycle industry continues to grow, the accessory market is expected to expand in parallel, offering opportunities for both local businesses and international companies looking to tap into this lucrative sector.

In addition to the thriving domestic market, Thailand's prominence in the global motorcycle industry is supported by its manufacturing capabilities. The country has become a key production hub for several major motorcycle brands, with factories located across the country producing motorcycles for both local and export markets. This manufacturing strength not only boosts Thailand's economy but also positions it as a critical supplier of motorcycles and accessories to other regions. The convergence of domestic demand, manufacturing expertise, and global trade networks places Thailand at the heart of the motorcycle industry, ensuring its continued growth and influence in the years to come. There are already several studies focused on different aspects of motorcycles. For example, Reeder et al. (1992) conducted research on the attitudes and riding patterns of young motorcyclists in New Zealand. Benjamin (1993) studied the rise of Honda to its leading position in the global motorcycle industry. Austin et al. (2010) examined the commodification and cultural imagery surrounding bikers in American society, while Minh et al. (2012) explored how motorcycles navigate through traffic queues at signalized intersections. Valera (2011) reported on the consumption patterns associated with motorcycling, and Haque et al. (2012) investigated multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes using log-linear models. Despite this wealth of research, none of these studies have specifically focused on motorcycle accessories or the consumer behavior in motorcycle accessory shops. This is a significant gap in the literature, as the motorcycle accessory market plays a crucial role in enhancing both the functionality and personal expression of motorcycle owners. To address this gap, the present research will focus on exploring consumer insights related to motorcycle accessory purchases. By employing completion techniques, such as sentence completion and story completion, this study aims to uncover deeper motivations, preferences, and attitudes of consumers in motorcycle accessory shops, providing valuable insights into this overlooked aspect of the motorcycle industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A motorcycle accessory refers to any feature or item selected by a motorcycle owner to enhance the safety, performance, or comfort of their vehicle. Common motorcycle accessories include components such as spark plugs, brake rotors, pedals, LED lights, tires, helmets, jackets, boots, batteries, exhausts, seats, and lights, among others. While the primary function of a motorcycle is to serve as a means of transportation, carrying the rider from one place to another (Valera, 2011), many owners view it as necessary to improve their motorcycles beyond its basic functionality. These enhancements are often geared towards increasing the safety, performance, and comfort of the ride, while also allowing

for personalization and aesthetic improvements. Motorcycle accessories can be installed in various ways, with some included during the manufacturing process as either standard or optional features provided by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM). Alternatively, many accessories are purchased separately by motorcycle owners, who then install them according to their personal needs or preferences. This aftermarket customization allows motorcyclists to upgrade their vehicles to meet specific safety standards, improve overall performance, or add personalized touches that reflect their individual style. The wide range of available accessories offers motorcyclists numerous options to tailor their motorcycles to better fit their riding habits, environmental conditions, and personal preferences.

Valera (2011) highlights that manufacturers have introduced value-added features, such as GPS systems and ABS braking systems, which not only enhance the functionality and safety of motorcycles but also drive up their cost, in some cases making motorcycles as expensive, if not more so, than cars. This development demonstrates the growing complexity and customization potential of modern motorcycles, as well as the increasing demand for advanced technology among riders. Today, motorcycle enthusiasts have access to a wide array of accessory brands that cater to different needs and preferences. Popular brands include Fox Racing, Pirelli Tires, Bell Helmets, Scorpion, Joe Rocket, Power Trip, Motocentric, O'Neal Racing, Dunlop Tires, Fly Racing, Michelin Tires, and Shoei Helmets, among others. These brands provide a diverse selection of accessories, from protective gear such as helmets and jackets to performance-enhancing components like tires and exhaust systems. In Thailand, motorcycle accessory shops are a common sight, offering a variety of products to meet the needs of riders. Figure 1 illustrates a typical motorcycle accessory shop in Thailand, where consumers can find everything from safety equipment to aesthetic enhancements, all designed to improve their riding experience. The broad range of options in such shops reflects the significant demand for motorcycle customization and the critical role accessories play in the Thai motorcycle market.

While the characteristics of motorcycles, such as affordability and ease of use, are appealing, the vehicle also presents significant risks. Valera (2011) highlights the growing number of motorcycle accidents, which often result in serious injuries or fatalities, particularly among younger riders. This increase in accidents has made motorcycle safety a major public health concern (Reeder et al., 1992). In the U.S., during the late 1950s, motorcyclists were often depicted in print and film media as threats to social order, contributing to a negative perception of motorcycle culture (Austin et al., 2010). In many Asian countries, motorcyclists are among the most crash-prone road users (Haque et al., 2012). For instance, despite the high number of motorcycles on the road, Vietnam had not fully enforced helmet laws by 2010, exacerbating the risks for riders (Minh et al., 2012). The lack of proper safety enforcement in such regions continues to contribute to the vulnerability of motorcyclists. In response to these risks, some governments have actively discouraged the use of motorcycles. This government pressure, however, led manufacturers to innovate and create a whole new industry around motorcycle-related products, focusing on safety and performance enhancements (Valera, 2011). These developments include protective gear like helmets, improved braking systems, and other accessories that aim to mitigate the dangers associated with riding motorcycles. The growing concern for safety has also fueled the market for motorcycle accessories, particularly those aimed at enhancing rider protection and reducing the likelihood of accidents. Despite the inherent risks, the motorcycle remains a popular mode of transportation, especially in regions where affordability and maneuverability outweigh the dangers. The increasing focus on safety and the development of protective gear reflect the ongoing efforts to balance the benefits of motorcycle use with the need to address the public health risks it poses. Although motorcycling may carry a negative image due to concerns like road accidents and the environmental impact of emissions (Valera, 2011), many motorcyclists remain deeply passionate about their vehicles. Motorcycles often symbolize a desire for freedom and individuality, as noted by Austin et al. (2010). This sense of freedom is further emphasized by the flexibility motorcycles offer, allowing riders to navigate traffic in ways other vehicles cannot, sometimes disregarding lane discipline (Minh et al., 2012). This flexibility and the personal connection motorcyclists have with their bikes may drive them to express their individuality by enhancing the appearance and performance of their motorcycles. Consequently, motorcycle accessory shops play a crucial role, becoming one of the main channels through which motorcyclists acquire products to customize and upgrade their vehicles.

The motorcycle industry, though similar to the car industry in many respects, is lagging behind by a decade or more in terms of development and consumer trends (Valera, 2011). However, the growing popularity of motorcycle accessories has created a robust market, particularly among young riders who often view their motorcycles as extensions of their personalities. This is especially true for teenagers, who may not yet fully grasp the value of money as they are often financially supported by their parents (Putthiwani et al., 2011). This demographic, eager to spend on enhancing their motorcycles, presents a lucrative opportunity for motorcycle accessory shop owners. Given the tendency of adolescents to spend freely, regardless of product price, motorcycle accessory shops should consider targeting this group as a primary customer base. Teenagers are often willing to invest in high-priced accessories to personalize their motorcycles, making them an ideal market for products that enhance both the aesthetic appeal and performance of their bikes. By focusing on this consumer segment, shop owners can capitalize on the willingness of younger riders to invest in accessories, tapping into a customer group that is enthusiastic about motorcycle culture and eager to express their individuality through customization.

3. METHODOLOGY

Completion techniques are qualitative methods that require respondents to complete an unfinished stimulus, often presented in the form of a sentence completion test or a story completion test (Malhotra, 1999). These techniques are considered indirect because they subtly elicit responses, unlike more direct methods such as the laddering technique, which is a non-disguised, in-depth, one-on-one interviewing process (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2006). The key advantage

of completion techniques is their ability to encourage respondents to reveal their deeper, underlying feelings and attitudes, which might not surface through direct questioning. This makes them particularly useful for uncovering concealed or subconscious thoughts, such as a motorcycle accessory buyer's attitudes and preferences. By applying completion techniques, researchers can gain insights into the hidden motivations and emotional drivers that influence consumer behavior, offering a more nuanced understanding of the buyer's mindset. Malhotra (1999) highlights that sentence completion is a technique where respondents are given incomplete sentences to finish, while story completion requires them to provide their own endings to partially developed stories. These methods, particularly sentence completion, have become widely recognized as valuable tools for assessing personality, as noted by Holaday et al. (2000). In this research, such techniques are employed to gain deeper insights into consumer behavior and attitudes toward motorcycle accessory shops.

The use of sentence and story completion allows for a qualitative exploration of consumer perceptions, uncovering underlying thoughts and motivations that may not be revealed through direct questioning. The goal of this research is to understand how consumers engage with motorcycle accessory shops at different stages of their buying journey, including their thought processes before, during, and after purchasing motorcycle accessories. By delving into these insights, this research aims to inform the development of strategic marketing campaigns and promotions tailored specifically to the needs and expectations of motorcycle accessory shoppers. Understanding the consumer's mindset through these qualitative techniques will help create more targeted, effective marketing strategies that resonate with customers, ultimately improving their experience and satisfaction with motorcycle accessory shops. The questionnaire used in this study was divided into three sections. The first two sections incorporated both the sentence completion technique and the story completion technique, designed to elicit deeper insights into the respondents' attitudes and behaviors toward motorcycle accessories. The final section focused on collecting demographic information from the respondents. A full version of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. To recruit participants, accidental sampling was used. Based on findings from Reeder et al. (1992), which indicated that more males than females tend to ride motorcycles, male respondents were selected to complete the questionnaire when they entered the motorcycle accessory shop. All participants were confirmed to be male and at least 15 years old, as this is the legal minimum age for riding a motorcycle. The duration of time spent in the shop purchasing motorcycle accessories was not measured or considered in the study, as individuals perceive and utilize time differently (Putthiwani and Kincart, 2011), and this variance could have affected the accuracy of any time-based assessments. The focus, instead, remained on understanding the respondents' experiences and insights related to their motorcycle accessory purchases. Respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaires independently, as research suggests that sentence completion tests yield more accurate and informative results when done without external influence (Holaday et al., 2000). The study took place in a motorcycle accessory shop located in the Northeastern part of Thailand, selected for its conducive environment for gathering consumer insights. Prior to participating, all respondents were asked for permission and informed that the research was part of an academic study, assuring them that their identities would remain confidential. The questionnaire was administered in Thai, the participants' native language, ensuring clear understanding and accuracy in responses. All participants willingly agreed to take part in the research. Upon completion of the surveys, respondents were thanked for their time and input. In the final phase of the research, the collected questionnaires were carefully analyzed to extract valuable consumer insights regarding the purchasing behavior and attitudes of motorcycle accessory buyers.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Respondent profile

Respondent Number	Age range (Years old) change to be exact number?	Source of money earned	Frequency of buying motorcycle accessory/Buying only from favorite shop	Product bought/ Preferred promotion
1	16-19	Part-time Job	Twice a year/Yes	Accessory/2
2	16-19	Part-time Job	Twice a year/Yes	Accessory/2
3	16-19	Parents/Guardian	Twice a year/Yes	Pedal/2

Table 1 provides a profile of respondents, detailing their age range, source of income, frequency of purchasing motorcycle accessories, and the type of products they bought or preferred. The information helps to understand the consumer behavior of young individuals in relation to motorcycle accessory purchases. For Respondent 1, the age range is 16-19 years old, and the source of money is a part-time job. This respondent buys motorcycle accessories twice a year and prefers to buy only from a favorite shop. The product bought or preferred is an accessory, and they have made 2 purchases. Respondent 2 is also in the 16-19 age range, earns money from a part-time job, and similarly buys accessories twice a year from a favorite shop. Like Respondent 1, they also bought an accessory, with a total of 2 purchases. For Respondent 3, who is also 16-19 years old, the source of income is parents or a guardian. This respondent buys twice a year from a favorite shop and prefers pedals, with 2 purchases made. All three respondents fall within the 16-19 age range and make

motorcycle accessory purchases twice a year, primarily from a favorite shop. Two of the respondents rely on part-time jobs as their income source, while one depends on parents or guardians. The products bought are accessories or pedals, with each respondent having made 2 purchases.

Table 2: Summary of respondents

Incomplete Sentences		Insight
I knew Shop Moto	⇒	By the recommendation from friends
I decorate my motorcycle	⇒	Because I think it will look cool
The atmosphere/impression of Shop Moto	⇒	So small
The service of Shop Moto	⇒	Seller gave good suggestions
After I bought motorcycle accessories from Shop Moto, the service of Shop Moto	⇒	Good service
I like Shop Moto	⇒	Because of good service

Table 2 provides a summary of respondents' insights based on incomplete sentences related to their experiences with Shop Moto, highlighting their perceptions and motivations for choosing the shop. The statement "I knew Shop Moto" is completed by respondents with "by the recommendation from friends." This suggests that word-of-mouth and personal recommendations play a significant role in attracting customers to the shop. The statement "I decorate my motorcycle" is completed with "because I think it will look cool." This indicates that aesthetic appeal and personal style are primary motivations for respondents to purchase motorcycle accessories. For the statement "The atmosphere/impression of Shop Moto," respondents expressed that it is "so small." This implies that the physical space of Shop Moto might be perceived as limited or cramped, which could affect the overall shopping experience. The statement "The service of Shop Moto" is completed with "seller gave good suggestions." This highlights that the shop's staff is knowledgeable and helpful, offering valuable recommendations to customers.

After purchasing accessories, the statement "After I bought motorcycle accessories from Shop Moto, the service of Shop Moto" is followed by "good service." This reinforces the idea that respondents are satisfied with the service they receive post-purchase. Lastly, the statement "I like Shop Moto" is explained with "because of good service." This suggests that the quality of service is a key reason why customers prefer Shop Moto, emphasizing the importance of customer service in building loyalty. In sum, respondents appreciate Shop Moto for its good service, helpful staff, and recommendations from friends, despite its small size. Their motivation to decorate their motorcycles stems from the desire to enhance their bikes' aesthetic appeal.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This research also sheds light on how consumers consider the price of motorcycle accessories during their purchasing decisions. Given that motorcycle accessories are vehicle-related products, sellers often feel obligated to offer discounts when customers inquire about price reductions. The story completion section of the questionnaire specifically addressed this aspect by requiring respondents to reflect on pricing and promotional strategies in hypothetical scenarios. In doing so, respondents were asked to assume the behavior of someone else, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of their thoughts on pricing and promotions. This approach provided insights into how real-life customers view price negotiations and the role of promotions in their purchasing decisions. For motorcycle accessory manufacturers, gaining a deep understanding of consumer preferences regarding accessory products is crucial for developing effective market strategies in Thailand. By implementing well-planned and targeted marketing efforts, manufacturers can build brand recognition, foster customer loyalty, and establish a strong market presence. Effective marketing not only enhances the reputation of a brand but also ensures that it resonates with the needs and desires of the target audience. However, manufacturers must be cautious. Overly aggressive or inappropriate marketing tactics could lead to excessive consumption, which may have negative consequences, both for consumers and the brand's reputation. Ethical and thoughtful marketing practices are essential to avoid potential backlash or the promotion of unsustainable consumption patterns, ensuring long-term success in the marketplace. One limitation of this research lies in the use of the sentence completion technique, which presents challenges in terms of reliability. The interpretation of responses depends heavily on the correlations between the respondent's personality and the researcher's experience, insight, and understanding of behavioral dynamics. This subjective element introduces variability in the analysis, making the results less consistent and potentially less reliable. As a result, the findings from this technique may not always be generalizable to a broader population, limiting the extent to which they can be applied to wider contexts or different consumer groups. Moreover, this study serves as a pilot qualitative research, intended primarily as a guideline for future studies in the motorcycle accessory market. Due to its exploratory nature and limited scope, further research is necessary to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Future studies should aim to increase the sample size by surveying a larger number of buyers and incorporating more motorcycle accessory shops across different regions. Expanding the scope in this way will provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior and preferences. Additionally, quantitative research is strongly recommended for studies involving a few hundred or more motorcycle accessory buyers. Employing quantitative methods would allow for more statistically robust analysis, enabling researchers to identify key trends and patterns with greater precision and generalizability. This approach will complement the qualitative insights gained in this pilot study, providing a deeper and more well-rounded understanding of the motorcycle accessory market.

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