



Micro Economics

Selling TM In A Macro Market

by Clark Emery



Editor's Note: Plenty of media attention gets focused on the Japanese Big Four OEMs and the American-made machines like Harley-Davidson and Indian, but sometimes the other players in the market get overlooked. From ATK and CCM to MZ and Vertemati, there are a host of motorcycle manufacturers looking to do business with dealers. In February we launched an ongoing look at this market segment with the Italian-made VOR. Since then we've covered Husaberg, KTM and MZ. This time, we take a look at another player in Italy's bike-building renaissance, TM.

Pete Vetrano, a businessman and an off-road fan, is the general manager at TWS-USA, parent company of TM-USA, the U.S. importer of the elite TM line of off-road bikes. "Pete is a real enthusiast, and while attending a European show a few years ago, he noticed a full-sized TM 85cc Enduro," says TM's man of many hats, VP of sales/marketing Rod Anastasia. "These bikes had done really well in the ISDE, and appealed to Pete, so he bought two or three of them. Things sort of snowballed from there."

Perhaps "snowballing" is a relative term given the microcosmic market niche TM is shooting for. Because they are hand-built works replica racing bikes, production is limited to about 2,500 per year. "For 2001, we sold a little over 200 units in the U.S.," reports Anastasia.

Got Growth?

"Right now, we have about 50 dealers," says Anastasia. "We are pretty strong in the Northwest, strong in the Midwest and still developing the East. Overall, in my opinion, the enthusiast-owned stores have grown with us. Most of our new dealers are actually grown from established shops that have been successful with our LEM minibike brand." TWS USA is also the LEM importer, offering an entry-level line of bikes to complement TM's high-end race bikes.

Although Anastasia feels TM brand loyalty is increasing, having more established European OEM siblings has certainly helped. "The resurgence of competitive bikes from the big European manufacturers has really helped." Instead of just the Japanese Big Four, customers are starting to realize they now have viable alternatives.

"It's another option for riders to look into. There is also an interest in having a different bike. Look at what Ducati has accomplished," Anastasia adds. "Look at what Aprilia is doing now in the U.S. Old-school European stuff was very specialized, and it was hard to stay competitive... not any more."

Continued on page 68