

## **Picking a Scooter - Revisited**

In 1980, despite her promise to lower unemployment, the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher implemented economic measures which actually increased the length of the dole queues. When the political commentators asked whether she was going to change her policies, she famously stated, This Lady's not for turning. It was a statement of total self-belief in a world of doubt, a display of leadership and courage, a stand against the union bullies. She was saying I am right, you are wrong, that's the end of it.

So what has this got to do with picking a scooter, you might ask? Well back in the March 2006 edition of Two Wheels Scooter I had an article published regarding the process you should go through to purchase a scooter. It's a great process. It has structure, it has logic. It determines your needs, it weighs up the options, and comes up with the ideal solution. But over the last few months, I've come to realize that it's not quite right. And unlike the Iron Lady, I'm not too arrogant to admit that my recommended process may be flawed.

You see the nature of scientific principal is to put forward a hypothesis and then test it. If the results of a large number of tests over a significant period of time don't disprove the hypothesis then you end up with a theory. Now since the last article, I have been checking out my scooter selection hypothesis, and I am very aware that at least on a couple of occasions, it didn't quite hit the target...

Back in April, a young lad came in with his parents to look at scooters. Now it just so happens that this family originates from the same country as me. And I hate to admit it, but citizens of my country of birth are stereotypically known for being "careful" with their money. And so it was with Dad. Whilst the son was clearly up for the sporty looking model, Dad appeared to be more attracted to the slightly lower price tag of the retro one. And as long as it was in their team colours of Glasgow Rangers what could be the problem? Since Dad was paying, the decision was his. Well three months later and Dad's back in the shop looking for a new battery so he can put the scooter up for sale. Why? It's sitting in the shed collecting dust. The son, who previously couldn't wait to turn sixteen and get out on his own, is suddenly just not interested.

Now it would be possible to conclude that in that scenario that it was perhaps the handling or capability of the scooter which had resulted in its banishment to the tool-shed. Well perhaps. But just a few months prior, we were being called up on a regular basis to look at another scooter which always seemed to have starting problems, and whose battery kept going flat, much to the annoyance of the owner's husband. The reason for the problem was of course very clear. The scooter just wasn't getting used enough. Why not? Well it transpired that it was originally bought for the 16 year old son as well as his mother to use. But when the son had turned 17 he bought a car and stopped using the scooter. So then Mum admitted that whilst that scooter had been great for her son, she had never

really liked it, hence its lack of use and subsequent starting problems. You see Mum always wanted a retro model, whilst Dad and son “wanted the flexibility of a two-seater model” (Female readers – please note how blokes use logical argument to justify a more emotional decision. The boys in this case just wanted the sport looking model, but they know that they couldn’t win an argument based on looks so turned to functionality instead. Sly dogs!). Well now that the boys were out the way, and with her agreement, the next customer that called us wanting a second hand scooter was given her phone number. And within two days, another 16 year old was delighted to be on scooter A, and Mum bought a new retro number. Consequently she has had no problems since, and is as delighted as a pig in the proverbial. Everybody happy.

So what do these examples tell us?

Well here’s the rub. The sarcastic little comment I made at the end of the last article, you know, find one you like the look of, pick the right colour, pay the money and off you go; the “this is how a girl would pick a scooter” process. Well I’ve come to realize that this is possibly the most important part of the selection criteria. Consider shoes. They come in a big range of styles, looks and colours. If you find a pair that you’re comfortable in, you’re never out of them. If you don’t they just sit in the back of the wardrobe. Well scooters aren’t actually that much different.

Now particularly if a major criteria for buying a scooter is to keep your transport costs down, then this desire factor is actually critical. The running costs of scooters are considerably cheaper than for cars, and most public transport. We’ve found that for many people they can buy a scooter on finance, pay for its running costs AND still save money compared to what they would pay just for the petrol for the car! But you will only save this money if you are actually using your scooter instead of another mode of motorized transport.

And if you don’t really love your scooter? Well there will be more and more days when you’ll find excuses to use the car or public transport instead. And that would be a real shame. You see you really do have the opportunity to save big bucks using a scooter, so spending a bit more money up front will pay off in the long term if the result is greater use. You might really fancy a classic brand model but it seems expensive compared to the others. Well, before you discount it, do the maths. You can buy the best; yes the very best that the scooter world has to offer; and it’s still going to be cheaper than the cheapest new car that’s out there. Bargain! I mean, lets face it, few of us are ever going to be able to afford a new Rolls Royce, a Bentley, an Aston Martin. Emotionally, we’d love to, but in all probability we are going to have to settle for a Ford Focus. But in the scooter world, the reality is that we probably can find a way to afford whatever we want. We can indulge in the top of the range. And that’s certainly worth considering if it’ll help to keep you riding, because that’s what will help you pay for it!

So whilst buying a scooter is a very logical decision, you can, and should include a significant emotional aspect to your selection of which one. And having ridden a lot more scooters in the time since my first article, I realize that this emotional aspect differs from person to person, and even from one scooter to your next. I mean, my preference has always been retro scooters, but my current ride is the sportiest looking 150 that's out there – illogical, but I love it! You see, it might be how you look on the scooter, how it handles, or how comfortable the seat is. It might be the riders view, the sound of the engine when you rev it, or a dinky feature that separates it from the pack. Perhaps it gives you a connection you to a film, a holiday in Italy or in Bali, to an item of fashion, or a pop video. Call it the X-factor. But we encourage customers when they are buying to always test ride more than one scooter, because we are fairly sure that when they find the right one, when they find their X-factor, there is a very obvious connection, and their decision making becomes extremely clear.

When it comes to picking a scooter, use your head, but follow your heart. It'll definitely be worth your while.

*Having written an article about buying scooters using a very logical approach, it became clear with time that though it worked, it was more than a little flawed. Desire is a vital component on buying a scooter, and because they self-finance, splashing out a little more to get something that you really like will pay dividends! Recently a customer bought a Vespa LX50 rather than a less expensive brand because he calculated that what he would save in petrol and parking would pay for the scooter within 8 months. Sure, if he'd bought a cheaper model it would have paid for itself in 4 months, but he's having much more fun riding a classic scooter!*

*So read both the articles together and your selection process should be complete – and we hope you find all the scooters that your heart desires on our webpages!*