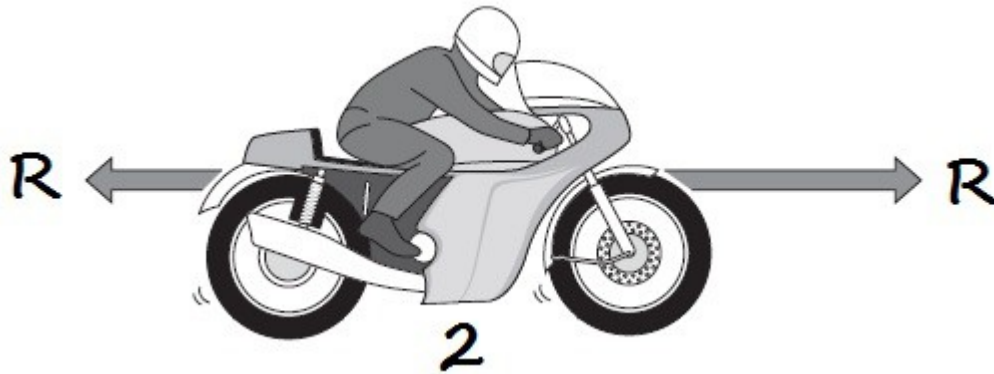


The R2R Ratio

By
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At some point in our riding careers, we all consider group riding. The allure of traveling with like-minded companions, whether for a day, a week or more can be compelling. There are many options, including national groups such as BMW Motorcycle Owners Association (BMWMOA) and Harley Owners Group (HOG), as well as regional and local organizations. But the logistics of transitioning from solo to group riding can be vexing. How many riders will be in a group? How often do they ride? When do they ride? Who invented tofu and why? While some answers in this world may forever remain elusive, finding the right group of riders to hang your helmet with can be achieved with a little introspection.

Imagine you are a solo rider trying to assess various riding groups for compatibility. When evaluating a new group, assess it through the lens of these four qualities:

Level of Formality: Are group rides well-planned, calendared events or whenever?

Investment (time & money): Are groups dues driven with many events or bare-bones affairs?

Riding Style: Are groups structured and regulated or anybody's anything?

Accessibility: Are group rides local to you or is half the ride getting to the ride?

Individual rider needs can vary considerably. Ultimately, the balance you need to find is the balance between saddle time and socializing. This is the 'R2R Ratio'--Riding to Recreation. Though the answer you're looking for will vary depending on your individual needs, this simple formula can help assess groups to see how they might fit your needs. Consider the following three hypothetical scenarios.

Scenario #1

The Chrome Cruisers is a national organization primarily oriented towards domestic cruising motorcycles. The group consists of state chapters with local chapters found in most counties. It is a mostly informal group, with the \$75 per year membership fee primarily used to finance monthly dinner meetings and the yearly national rally. Group rides are not limited by numbers, and rides can vary from a couple cruisers to dozens of Harleys and Indians. An average ride starts at 9 AM—kickstands up at 10. Three hours later (a breakfast stop takes a good hour) the logistics of parking, gassing bikes, and group communications have led to a grand total of 85 miles ridden.

Scenario #2

The Silver Bullets is a regional group, though several states have isolated chapters with little national connection. Most riders are in their 50's and 60's, and ride high-performance sport-touring models. Most motorcycles are fully farkled with GPS, intercoms and fuel cells for added range. The yearly \$495 includes patches, newsletters and admittance to monthly tours and activities. Group rides start and leave punctually at 7AM. Rides generally consist of 200-250 miles before lunch. A brief lunch

and logistics check leads to a further 250 miles before riders return to the starting point by 7PM.

Scenario #3

The Moto Mania is a local, non-chapter organization. Rides are informal and consist of local riders of varying abilities. Rides start at 8AM twice a month on Saturdays. Ride captains break riders into two groups for more experienced and less experienced riders. A sweep rider follows each group to assist riders who may have mechanical or other issues. Rides vary according to assessed group needs. Meal stops are pre-scheduled and rides average 4-6 hours and 200-250 miles. No dues are required and a Facebook page serves as a logistics hub.

After rating each group using the following criteria, a clearer picture emerges.

The Chrome Cruisers

Formality	Investment	Riding Style	Accesibility
XXX	X	X	XXX

The Chrome Cruisers is a more recreation oriented group. With late start times, long breaks and low-mileage riding days as well as group events, this group treats riding as a secondary concern to socializing and non-riding activities, scoring a high formality level. However, with many local chapters, it remains a relatively accessible group to large number of riders.

The Silver Bullets

Formality	Investment	Riding Style	Accesibility
XXX	XXX	XXX	X

Conversely, The Silver Bullets is a highly ride oriented group. With long hours in the saddle covering interstate distance rides, recreation clearly takes second place, scoring high in formality. This group demands a high level of financial investment, not only in terms of membership dues, but motorcycle and accessories too. Riding demands remain high, limiting membership.

The Moto Mania

Formality	Investment	Riding Style	Accesibility
X	X	XXX	XXX

The Moto Mania clearly strikes a midpoint. With an approach that has a high accessibility to all riders (vs. cruiser or sport-touring only) that allows riders to select a level of group matching individual abilities. This group attempts to strike a balance.

So, after applying the R2R Ratio formula, what was your choice? While a laid back, low mileage cruise with companions can, on occasion, be alluring, I personally would feel frustrated due to the low amount of actual saddle time. Similarly, while I do relish the occasional Iron Butt attempt—the thought of constantly hammering my motorcycle and myself would soon wear thin. A more balanced approach that allows each rider to feel they can find a place of comfort and balance can't be overlooked. But who am I to say? I've heard some brave souls eat tofu turkeys for Thanksgiving...