

BMW sales jump 20%, suggesting recovery

NOVEMBER TOP MARKETS

BMW's goal is to balance its global sales between markets in Europe, the Americas and Asia.



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BMW exports about 70 percent of the vehicles it produces in Greer to more than 120 countries worldwide, and most go through the Port of Charleston.

X-family vehicles built in Greer are helping lead charge

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BMW Group's global sales jumped nearly 20 percent last month, another indication of recovery for the U.S. and world economies.

The Group, which consists of BMW, Mini and Rolls-Royce, reported a November increase of 19.8 percent, with huge jumps in sales of Rolls-Royces, and a year-to-date increase of 13.5 percent.



Source: BMW

SUZIE RIDDLE/Staff

"That's an indication that the recovery, nascent as it is, is beginning to bubble up," said Sujit CanagaRetna, senior analyst with the State Council of Governments.

With the strong November sales, "The BMW Group is well on its way to

reaching its target of more than 1.4 million units for this year," said Ian Robertson, member of the board of management of BMW AG who is responsible for sales and marketing.

Leading the charge for the company are the new

5 Series and the X-family of vehicles, the company said. The X5 sports activity vehicle, X6 sports activity coupe and X3 SAV are built at BMW's Greer facility.

Sales of the 5 Series sedan were up 86.9 percent while 5 Series Touring volumes climbed 62.9 percent. Deliveries of the BMW 5 Series Gran Turismo more than doubled.

Also, BMW X5 sales

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rose 17.2 percent in November while the X6 maintained its high levels of sales with an increase of half of a percentage point.

The company's X1 deliveries passed the 100,000-unit mark one year after its market launch at the end of October 2009. The X1 is the sole member of the X-family not built in Greer.

On completion of a \$750 million plant expansion, production of the X3 began more than a month

ago. The addition of the new model and the continued strength of the X5 and X6 models resulted in BMW hiring 1,600 additional contract workers in the last four months of the year.

The next generation X3 launched in Europe last month, with a debut in the United States — the X3's largest market — scheduled for January 2010. The second-generation vehicle reported "exceptionally strong new orders," BMW said, with a total of 1,062 vehicles delivered in November.

"Obviously, these numbers are coming off a year when the numbers were

very bad," said CanagaRetna. Although the growth in 2010 is significant, it is skewed because 2009 numbers were low.

But he said China is a dream for sellers of all luxury goods, including Rolls-Royces and high-end BMWs. In addition, "We have seen a very impressive growth on Wall Street, resulting in major bonuses. Those bonuses translate into high-end purchases."

BMW's success is important to South Carolina as a whole.

About 70 percent of the



CanagaRetna

BMWs produced in Greer are exported, most through the Port of Charleston, to more than 120 countries throughout the world.

John Baker, executive director of Greenville Works,

said recently that BMW "is in a good position" because of the strength of the company's exports.

Growth in the company's two major markets — Germany and the United States — was in the double digits, 29.6 percent and 25.2 percent respectively. China, the German car manufacturer's

third-largest market, experienced explosive growth of 104.3 percent in November.

BMW also reported positive trends in other key auto markets. South Korea reported sales were up 89.8 percent from a year ago while South Africa's sales increased 32.3 percent, Japan's 15.4 percent and Italy's 13 percent.

"Thanks to our ongoing product offensive, we are outperforming the market and were able to expand our market share worldwide once again in November," Robertson said. "As we do so, we continue to aim for a good balance between our sales in

Europe, the Americas and Asia."

Sales by Volkswagen AG's Audi division increased 5.2 percent while deliveries by Daimler AG's Mercedes-Benz, including the Smart city-car brand, jumped 14 percent.

BMW brand sales increased 19.7 percent in November and 15 percent for the year to date. Mini sales were up 19.3 percent last month and 5.4 percent for the first 11 months of the year. The Rolls-Royce brand continued soaring as deliveries climbed 164.4 percent in November and 259.4 percent so far this year.