

Media Information

20 April 2021

“10 questions to...” Christopher Wehner, Managing Director, BMW Group Asia. Succeeding in the new normal.

Singapore. The “new normal” of working and living continues to change as the pandemic evolves around the globe. However, even in these uncertain times, BMW Group Asia has surpassed multiple challenges and hit new milestones around the region. We speak to Christopher Wehner, Managing Director, about the market successes in the first half of 2021 and the driving forces behind these achievements.

The BMW Group Asia region consists of 14 markets across Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Pan Pacific Islands including Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Brunei, Laos, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, New Caledonia, Tahiti, and Guam.

How were sales in the BMW Group Asia region in Q1 2021 compared to the same period in 2020?

I'm proud to say this was the most successful quarter in the entire history of BMW Group Asia. The BMW brand witnessed a +33% increase in sales in Q1 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, and a +48% increase compared to the same period in 2019. In the luxury performance segment, BMW M witnessed a +13% increase compared to the same period in 2020.

Furthermore, as of March 2021, we increased our segment share in Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

How did MINI perform in the BMW Group Asia region?

MINI is available in 7 out of the 14 markets in the BMW Group Asia Region, including Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei, New Caledonia and Tahiti. While we witnessed a modest +4% increase in sales in the region, Vietnam, Brunei, and Singapore demonstrated strong growth this quarter.

Customers were clearly eager to own a piece of the MINI John Cooper Works range, as we saw +150% increase in sales this quarter compared to the same quarter in 2020.

In Singapore, our customers have also shown they are ready to go electric with a +60% increase in MINI Electric sales compared to the entire 2020. With the new model reaching Singapore's shores in a couple of months, we expect increased interest in this fully electric compact as our customers look to green modes of mobility in the near future.

In 2020, BMW Group Indonesia was segment leader for the first time in 15 years. How did they perform in Q1 2021?

BMW Indonesia delivered the highest number of vehicles in Q1 2021 compared to the last five years. We also recorded the highest number of luxury models sold in the last five years, with a high interest in the BMW X7. As the pandemic did not affect business in Indonesia until Q2 2020, this was a significant achievement. Other popular models in Q1 2021 included the BMW 5 Series and the BMW X5.

What do you think contributed to the sales success in the BMW Group Asia region in Q1 2021?

First and foremost, we have an extremely strong team and have excellent working relationships with our BMW and MINI dealer network in the region. These relationships are the basis for everything we have achieved to date.

While we continued with a hybrid working model, collaboration was at an all-time high in order to maintain a high level of customer service in both the online and offline spheres. Since the start of the pandemic, we have implemented an Omni-channel Marketing and Sales Strategy across many of our markets. This includes the BMW Digital Showrooms and MINI Online Galleries, where customers can browse and navigate our virtual showrooms. Through these online platforms, customers can demonstrate interest, secure special deals, and place deposits. They also have the option to participate in live chats with our Sales Consultants. The response has been very encouraging – in Singapore alone for example, we received on average of more than 900 online enquiries per month since the start of the pandemic.

In addition to taking our sales and marketing activities online, we also digitalised our Aftersales services. Customers now have the ability to book appointments online, or through the Performance Motors Limited (PML) smartphone app. In consideration of our customers' safety and convenience, they are also able to arrange for a contactless pick-up and delivery for their cars at the location and timing of their choice.

Finally, a vital part of our success is owed to a strong product portfolio across multiple vehicle segments. In addition to the all-new BMW 4 Series Coupe and the new BMW 5 Series that were introduced in the second half of 2020, we also launched the all-new BMW M3 Competition, the all-new BMW M4 Competition, the new BMW M5 Competition, the new MINI Electric, and the MINI John Cooper Works GP Inspired Edition, among others.

What model contributed the most to growth in the region this quarter?

The BMW X3, one of our core models in the Sports Activity Vehicle (SAV) lineup, was the highest contributor in Q1 2021 vs. Q1 2020. This was followed by the BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe and the BMW X6.

How did the BMW business do in Singapore in Q1 2021?

Once again, we hit a milestone this quarter. BMW in Singapore witnessed a +57% increase in sales in Q1 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. This is by far the most successful quarter we have ever had in Singapore.

How were sales of electrified vehicles in Singapore?

We saw a +54% increase in sales of electrified vehicles compared to the same quarter in 2020. With the recent measures announced by the Singapore Government in support of electrified vehicles, including an expansion of the charging network, we believe 2021 will be a big year for the adoption of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and electric vehicles (EVs) in Singapore.

Was #BMWWorldSG a large contributing factor?

Customer response to #BMWWorldSG was immensely positive and resulted in a significant number of orders. As our first-ever “phygital” event, BMW customers and enthusiasts in Singapore were invited to experience the brand and see the latest models in person at both dealerships, as

well as online via an immersive virtual experience. The event was hosted in lieu of the annual Singapore Motorshow and lasted nearly eight weeks.

What was the uptake of your contactless aftersales services this quarter?

As of today, 40% of Aftersales service appointments are booked online or via the Performance Motors Limited (PML) smartphone app. This is a +9% increase compared to Q4 2020.

In addition, we witnessed a +46.9% increase in service consultation videos via CitNow, a personal video presentation service dedicated to the automotive sector. Not only is this technology even more appreciated in times of safe distancing, we also believe it offers transparency and demonstrates increased trust between our customers and Customer Service Agents. I'm pleased to note that the videos have been well received, and over 50% of our customers have approved recommendations made via the CitNow service.

Finally, collection and delivery services have increased an average of 9% more this quarter compared to the previous year.

What do customers have to say about your customer service?

According to a recent Voice of Customers Survey:

"BMW has really upped the level of aftersales service with the pickup/drop off for servicing. The Customer Service Agent kept me informed throughout the servicing and advised me sufficiently on my decisions. I'm very happy with the service." - Mr. Foo

"BMW provided quick and efficient servicing. From making my appointment, to having my car picked up and delivered back to me at an affordable price. The experience was made better thanks to the helpful Service Advisor who was both friendly and professional." – Mr. Chong

"The service was excellent. I was kept informed at all times, from start to finish. At each stage of servicing, what needed replaced, etc. Plus, when I requested the car to be picked up and sent back for servicing, the drivers and the service centre kept me well informed of their whereabouts. It was an excellent experience." - Ms. Lim.

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The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2020, the BMW Group sold over 2.3 million passenger vehicles and more than 169,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2020 was € 5.222 billion on revenues amounting to € 98.990 billion. As of 31 December 2020, the BMW Group had a workforce of 120,726 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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