RV retail sales show continued improvement in 2011

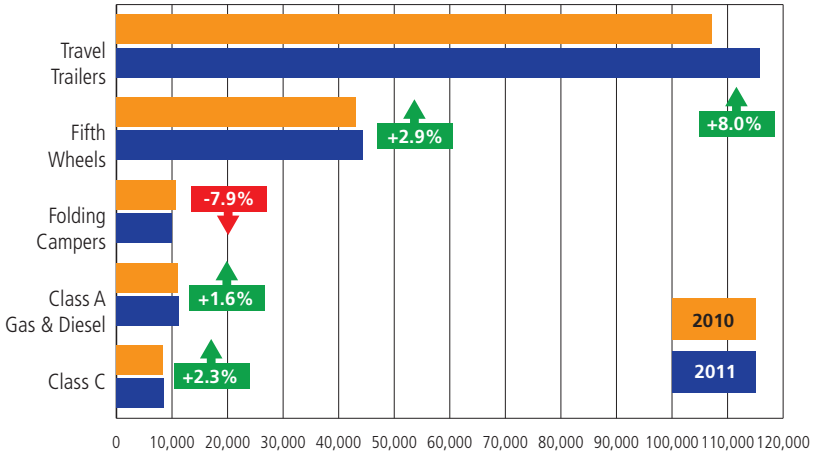
By Jeff Kurowski

Retail sales of travel trailers, fifth wheels, and Class A and Class C motorhomes improved again in 2011 but remained below 2008 levels, making it clear that 2009 was the most recent cyclical low-point for the RV industry.

Travel trailers, the industry's highest-volume product category, posted an 8 percent increase in U.S. retail sales in 2011 – 115,782 units compared with 107,221 units sold in 2010. However, 2011 sales remain below the 124,868 travel trailers sold by U.S. dealers in 2008 and the 163,193 units retailed in 2007.

Meanwhile, U.S. fifth wheel sales increased 2.9 percent during 2011 to 44,448 units, compared with 43,192 units retailed in 2010. U.S. dealers sold 56,807 fifth wheels in 2008 and 72,613 in 2007.

RV Retail Sales by Product Type, 2011 vs. 2010



Source: Statistical Surveys, Inc.

Smaller gains in motorhomes

The year-to-year increases were smaller in the case of Class A and Class C motorhomes. Class A retail sales increased 1.6 percent in 2011 to 11,294 units, compared with 11,113 sold in 2010. U.S. dealers sold 17,306 Class As in 2008 and 29,272 in 2007.

For Class C, U.S. retail sales increased 2.3 percent in 2011 to 8,555 units, compared with 8,360 retailed in

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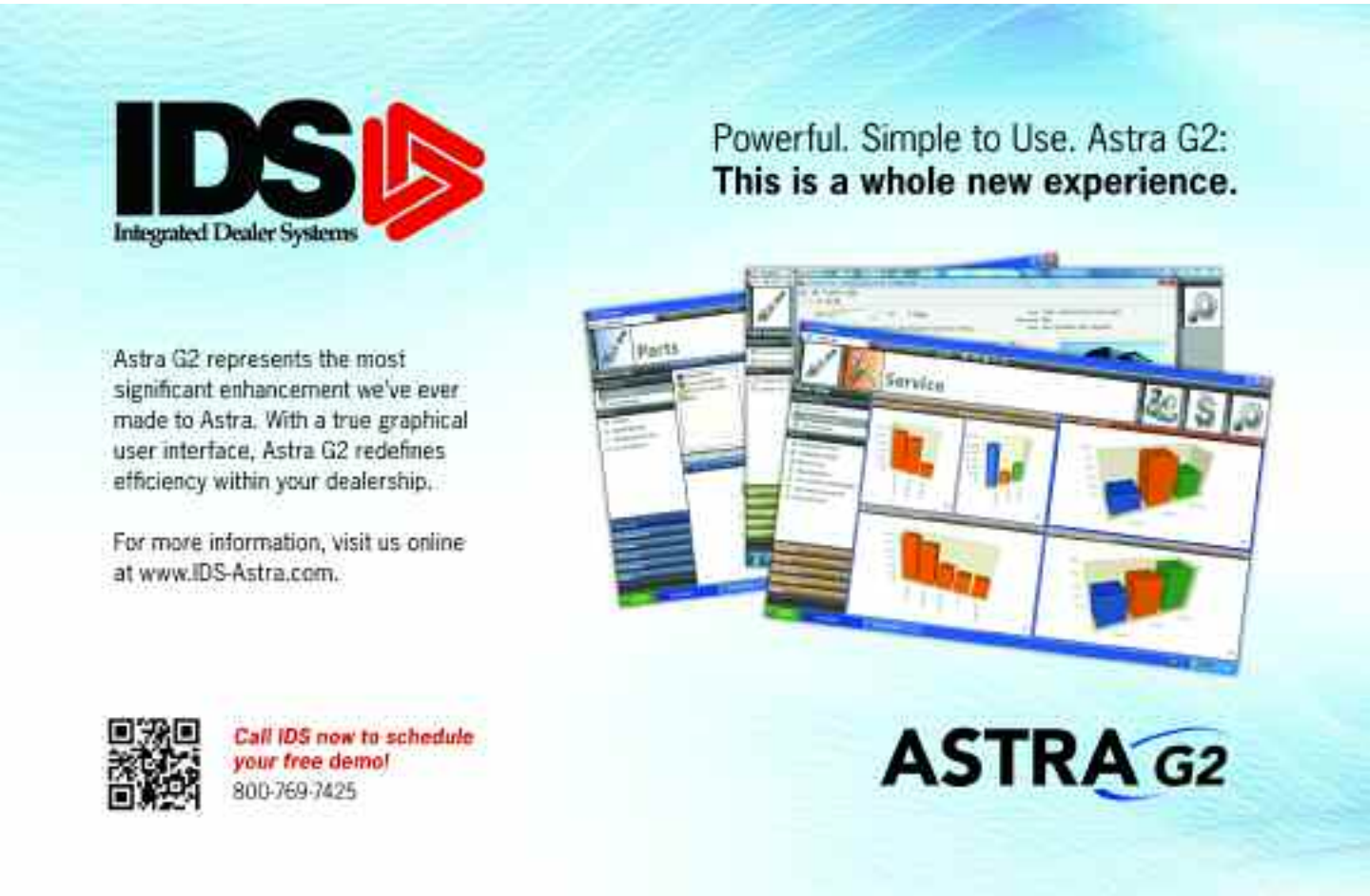

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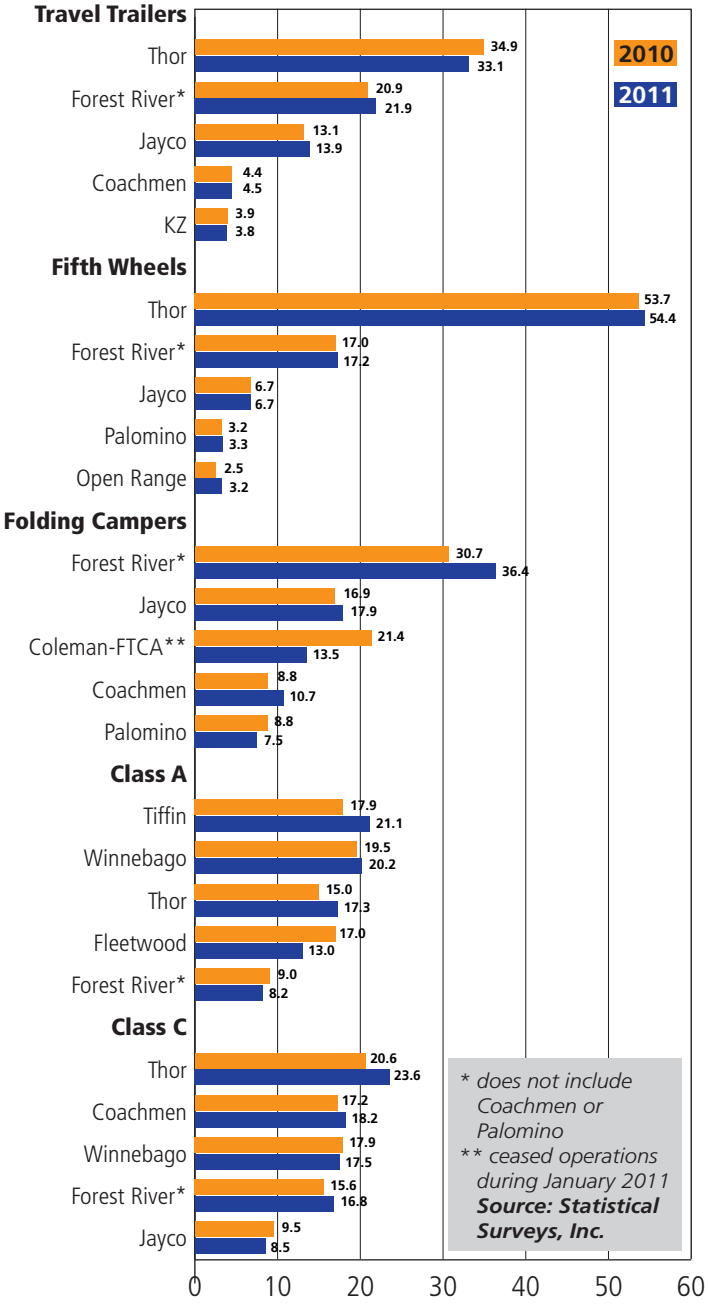
2007. U.S. dealers sold 11,604 Class Cs in 2008 and 18,211 in 2007.

The folding camper category experienced a year-to-year decline in retail sales due in part to a Top 5 manufacturer – Coleman-FTCA – going out of business in January 2010. So far, none of the surviving manufacturers of folding campers has made a strong move to fill the vacuum.

Folding camper retail sales declined 7.9 percent in 2011 to 9,921 units, compared with 10,767 units retailed in 2010. Dealers sold 17,491 folding campers in 2008 and 21,158 in 2007.

Source: Statistical Surveys, Inc. Based in Grand Rapids, MI, Statistical Surveys/The Thrive Group tracks retail sales activity for the RV industry. Reach the company at (616) 281-9898. The Thrive Group is a partnership between Statistical Surveys and Spader Business Management. ■

RV Manufacturer Retail Market Shares, 2011 vs. 2010