

2021

## Island Specialties: Sustainable Company

Emily Klein  
*Coastal Carolina University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/goal-11-sustainable-cities>



Part of the [Sustainability Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Klein, Emily, "Island Specialties: Sustainable Company" (2021). *Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*. 2.

<https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/goal-11-sustainable-cities/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Georgetown RISE UN Youth Corps at CCU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities by an authorized administrator of CCU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [commons@coastal.edu](mailto:commons@coastal.edu).

Emily Klein

Island Specialties

### *Introduction*

During the summer of 2021, I was given the opportunity to work for a local retail store in Pawleys Island South Carolina called Island Specialties, in effort to rebrand the company as a sustainable company. No matter who you are, we all go shopping and buy things we want/need. A big problem in our world today is the number of products being produced that are not sustainable and do not benefit the world or its people. My main task this summer was to create a website for the company Island Specialties in effort to bring more customers into the store and help educate others about the products they buy and why it benefits them. There is so much you can do with an online store besides just shopping. You can also use an online store to educate others about certain topics and help teach others about the products they are buying and why they benefit you which will help reduce climate change because more people will start to understand what a good product vs. a bad product is.

### *Report*

I believe any retail company needs to have an online store since our lives have been shaped by the internet and technology and is available at just the tip of your finger. It has been projected that E-commerce retail sales are on the rise after reviewing the total sales quarterly in

2020 as we can see online purchases accounted for about 16% of total sales in the U.S. (Figure 1)

Characteristic	Percentage of e-commerce sales
Q1 '21*	13.6%
Q4 '20	13.6%
Q3 '20	13.8%
Q2 '20	15.7%
Q1 '20	11.4%
Q4 '19	11.3%
Q3 '19	11.1%
Q2 '19	10.8%
Q1 '19	10.5%
Q4 '18	10.1%
Q3 '18	10%
Q2 '18	9.8%
Q1 '18	9.4%

*Figure 1. Quarterly share of e-commerce sales of total U.S. retail sales from 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2018 to 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2021*

I was highly surprised when starting my internship that she did not have an online store yet since she had a lot of great products. When I saw this, I jumped right in and said I would get her up and running online and make sure it was easily usable and manageable. I started by deciding how to design the website and how I wanted it to look and since I already have my own personal website, I decided I would use what I used for mine. We ended up wanting to also switch POS systems because I felt like her system was very unorganized and was not updated in forever. Since she wanted a new POS system, I decided to switch creating the website over to Square Up which is a POS system and website builder. After trying it out we came to realize we didn't like the system and needed to come up with. new plan. I now am running the website through Shopify due to their being more features. The work I currently have been doing relates to SGA 11 sustainable cities and communities because I was able to give others the opportunity to have a place to purchase sustainable items to help reduce their carbon footprint. Since I also was responsible for searching for new sustainable products to sell, I was also given the opportunity to help other environmentally friendly companies sell their products which relates to SGA 8 decent work and economic growth.

Air pollution is responsible for 4.2 million premature deaths in 2016 and one of the biggest factors that plays a role in that number is production companies. Whenever you go to the store to buy something you probably never look into where it came from or the conditions of the work environment that the product came from. Usually, the companies that produce the most emission into the atmosphere is the big-name brand companies that sell and make everything in bulk. At Island Specialties I would research different companies to find the best items to sell that would also support local businesses and small companies that produce the lowest emission rates. One of my favorite products we sell comes from a company called Squeeze De Citron which is a bag company that sells 100% recycled plastic bags that are handmade in Mexico with some of the prettiest designs and colors and the company donates the proceeds to The 5 Gyres Institute on plastic pollution.



Drop shipping has become one of the newest trends around for e-commerce websites. Companies have started allowing retailers to sell their products without having to deal with space for inventory or have to deal with shipping. I decided to add a page on the website where you can shop online deals only that includes the products that we dropship from different vendors. Adding this feature will allow Island Specialties to sell more products while also reducing their carbon footprint. Since with drop shipping you are not handling the products yourself, your carbon footprint reduces due to less packaging being needed, no more wasted inventory and no more plastic bags or receipt paper.

When running a local small business, it is hard to get up and running, especially if you are running the entire show like my boss. Recently in my life I have wanted to focus more of my attention on website design and coding because I want to be able to help my own freelance business and I want to be able to help other small business get a professional website created so they can make more sales and become more profitable. I started to learn about coding and the benefits of knowing how to code in the beginning of July 2021 and only a month later I already have my first iOS app completely finished for my photography company. One thing that small businesses typically don't have that big corporations do is an app. I have been using my company as a lab rat to see if I can integrate what I have learned through experimenting to help my employer and other companies that I work for. One of the biggest benefits of coding that I have learned is that it saves you money because you don't have to pay for website templates, app design, or hire someone to do the work for you. Knowing how to code also gives you free range to make your website or app as unique as you want, which can set you apart from the competition that is using the same templates provided on the many website builders. Once I finally get used to coding and understand what I am fully doing I plan on switching Island Specialties website into my coded design instead of our current template that we pay for monthly.

Along with having a website another great way to improve your small businesses sales is to be educated about the products you are selling. Whenever I am searching for new vendors or products, I make sure that I fully understand what the company's mission is, if they give back to the community, and if their products are made from sustainable materials. I then dig deeper and research about how and where the products are made and how they are better compared to

products that are similar but made differently. When customers come into the store and are looking at an item, I will make sure to educate them about why the product will enhance their life and why we have decided to work with the companies that we do. Typically, when you give the customer more knowledge about the product they are looking at, they will be more tempted to buy it so being educated about the products you are selling is always something you need to keep in mind while running a small business.

Island Specialties is located in Pawleys Island right off the road of 17 where the roads are always filled with potential customers. Another thing to keep in mind when trying to grow your business is being able to identify your niche and who you are trying to sell to. When you focus your time advertising to those who typically would use the products for sale, you will be able to draw more customers in and see who your loyal customers are. At Island Specialties our products typically are made for women and men over the age of 35. When selling brands such as Kanga, FreeFly, NuuMuu, and IBKUL most people under the age of 35 will most likely not be interested in the products due to their wants being different than an older age group. Most of our top selling items are clothing that is sun protective by using UPF materials and are branded towards people who like to spend their day boating, fishing, and playing tennis. When I am working, I typically will mentally take notes on the types of people who come in and buy our products and what they buy. With conducting watch studies, you can evaluate who your clientele is and what types of products interests them and what items they just skim by and not pick up. After evaluating what you observed through the day and week you should have a clear view at what your clientele is and have an idea of who you need to market your products to. After conducting my watch study, I realized that almost 100% of our customers that seemed to be over the age of 35 bought items

and the customers who seemed to be younger, typically would be in for less than five minutes and not buy anything because they were not interested since the products did not cater to their needs. Another one of our biggest income sources that caters more towards the 35+ community is our monogramming service. At Island Specialties we have an embroidery machine in store that allows us to do same day monogramming and custom orders. Island Specialties has been trusted by dozens of local businesses in Pawleys Island and Georgetown, making embroidered shirts, hats, bags, etc. with customized logos and designs with short turn over times, great quality, and is affordable. Working with other local businesses can lead to a more sustainable community because when everyone helps each other out and is willing to work together to become successful, it pushes away the chance for big corporations to pop up in the area which are not as sustainable for the environment compared to small local businesses.

Small local businesses are better for a region focusing on environmental sustainability. Typically, big corporation companies tend to have a higher carbon footprint compared to local businesses do to needing to produce products in mass and shipping the products all over the world which uses up our scarce fossil fuels and resources at a faster rate. Local businesses on the other hand tend to have a lower carbon footprint because typically the company doesn't need to produce items in mass amounts or ship thousands of products every day all over the world which reduces the amount of pollution being pumped into the atmosphere. Small local businesses also tend to make communities happier and more unique due to members being able to become successful from doing and selling something they love, leading to happiness and stability therefor, creating a happier and more sustainable community.

## *Conclusion.*

Local businesses are the backbone to any community working on becoming more environmentally sustainable and as a society we need to understand and appreciate the time and work it takes to be a successful business owner especially with a limited budget and the hands to help. Working with Donna at Island Specialties has showed me what it is really like to own a retail store and given me so many great opportunities to learn how I can grow my company as well as Island Specialties. I have been able to learn more about different types of marketing tools by talking with different members of the community who work in marketing, which taught me that the use of multiple marketing tools such as observation analysis, online selling, digital advertising, and product knowledge can help us grow as a society and develop into a more sustainable community as long as we can make the members of the community aware of the benefits from supporting local small businesses instead of large monopolistic corporations. If you are ready to get your small business up and ready or are ready to expand and reshape your company, then the key points you should take away from this report is to make sure you can identify your clientele, have multiple sources of income, and understand digital marketing is the new marketing so get your company on social media and take advantage of Instagram's promotion features for cheap and easy advertising. We as a community can become a more sustainable region together and set an example to other towns by working together and analyzing the products we buy and what kinds of products are being sold to help reduce our carbon footprint and helping Georgetown work towards working on SDG 11 sustainable cities and communities.



## References

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

<https://www.everythingbutwater.com/water>

[https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1)

<http://blog.mass.gov/blog/consumer-advice/think-local-7-reasons-why-supporting-local-business-is-good-for-your-community/#:~:text=Local%20businesses%20are%20more%20accountable,carbon%20footprint%20than%20larger%20companies.>