

Online Businesses Top Brick-and-Mortar Retail Stores in Holiday Shopping

By Johanna Lolax

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Online businesses likely will trump brick-and-mortar retail stores during the 2009 holiday shopping season.

Online retail sales outpaced in-person buying at all brick-and-mortar stores during 2008's holiday shopping season, reports corporate consultant Grant Thornton LLP in *Reviving Retail: Strategies for Growth in 2009*, and continues to grow.

"I chose an online business model to help consumers get the best deals and a money-back warranty on fine pearl jewelry, right from the comfort of their own home" explains pearl expert and online business owner Johanna Lolax, who founded TenderBeautyPearls.com in Holden, Massachusetts. "Traditional retailers are going out of business by the tens of thousands in this economy. Online buying has transformed the retail shopping landscape, and is the wave of the future."

Embracing sustainability and green products is another key to retail success – online or in-person - as outlined in the Grant Thornton Report.

"Pearl culturing depends on clean water, so pearl farmers work hard to protect the world's oceans and waterways," says Lolax. "I wanted to help communities locally and globally, and that's why I also founded Tender Beauty Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting environmental and other causes."

"The Foundation promotes preservation of the world's oceans and waterways, education for children, teens, and adults the world over," Lolax asserts, "and has a special focus on exploring the root causes and cures for asthmatic and allergic disorders in children and adults."

Lolax began her company in 2008, and offers boutique-quality cultured pearl necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and rings at deeply discounted prices. You'll find much more than the classic white pearl strand at the TenderBeautyPearls.com website. There are a variety of colors, and dozens of jewelry styles – from classic to current trends - all personally selected by Lolax. Many pieces are available for less than \$100, and some sell for under \$25.

"We buy directly from leading pearl farmers and suppliers in Asia," Lolax says. "These are gorgeous and lustrous real pearls at prices up to 80 percent less than you'd pay at a department or jewelry store. And since the pearl is the birthstone for June, you can purchase a memorable and enduring gift for a loved one, as we offer The Pearl Tack™, tie tacks for men and women, as well as dozens of pieces especially for women of all ages."

Lolax began the company after a career in the health-care industry as a manager and fundraiser. "I've always have been fascinated by gems, seashells, and fine jewelry," she says. "When I wear a beautiful pearl necklace, or start my day by putting on pearl earrings, I feel more prepared for the business of the day. Pearl jewelry makes you look more professional, and really lights up your face."

But pearls aren't just for the office. "We have created families of jewelry for specific events, such as our Bridal Pearls," says Lolax. "Our necklaces come in every length and style from the strand to "illusion" filaments, to fit the neckline of your gown. We also have drop-style earrings to complement veil and

coiffure.”

Other categories include the acclaimed “Akola” line of pearls from the Pacific Rim. “These pearls are on the rare side, and come from Vietnamese waters in surprising colors, including a delicate silver-aqua, and golden hues. The Akola pearls are so stunning; we are presenting them in single settings, as well as strands.”

“Pearls aren't just for “women of a certain age,” either, says Lolax, a Gemological Institute of America-certified jeweler. “We offer some pieces designed to appeal to young women who want something eye-catching for a night out. These pieces have sparkly settings and heart or octopus motifs. We also have very modern settings, such as a creative assembly of pearls on a precious metal wire.”

“Pearls are an ancient gemstone, mentioned in books in the bible, and in the verses of Shakespeare,” says Lolax. “But the reality is that these gorgeous gems are versatile and affordable for all.”

Johanna Lolax, BA, MA, GIA Pearls Diplomate, is a Boston native, and an entrepreneur whose lifelong dedication, and tireless endeavors in philanthropy, have raised millions of dollars to serve vulnerable people, including tens of thousands of elderly blind Vermonters.

This bold, independent woman was educated on scholarship at Milton Academy, UMASS Amherst, and Simmons College. She left the corporate world in 2007 to build an innovative online company based on trust, value, and service – www.TenderBeautyPearls.com.

Johanna now helps her community through her corporate giving program, and through Tender Beauty™ Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization founded to support environmental and other worthy causes.

Johanna currently resides in Worcester County with her husband, musician and sales professional Paul Lolax.

Tender Beauty Pearls™ is a member of the Better Business Bureau of Central New England. For more information, and to contact Johanna Lolax, call 1-877-PEARL-01 or 508-479-7116, or visit www.tenderbeautypearls.com and www.tenderbeautyfoundation.org.

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