The Responsible Project

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THE RESPONSIBLE PROJECT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts

by
Shannon N. Jackson
August 2017
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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to create a public relations campaign consisting of a series of promotional videos filmed specifically for Patagonia, the outdoors sportswear company, emphasizing their corporate social responsibility for viewing on their social media and web-based platforms. The commercials will feature three Colorado non-profit organizations tied to Patagonia through Patagonia’s Growing Grassroots Grant program.
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Chapter One: Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to create a public relations campaign consisting of a series of promotional videos filmed specifically for Patagonia, the outdoors sportswear company, emphasizing their corporate social responsibility (CSR) for viewing on their social media and web-based platforms. The commercials will feature three Colorado non-profit organizations tied to Patagonia through Patagonia’s Growing Grassroots Grant program.

Patagonia currently has strong communications across all digital channels. However, this project is meant to amplify their current communications and CSR efforts by providing a platform for their Grassroots Grant recipients to speak. This tactic will service the public in educating consumers about the local community work and about the Patagonia brand. Overall, this project aims to balance the natural humility of Patagonia’s brand image with the amplification of their grant recipients, who in turn promote the Patagonia brand as a corporate leader in environmentalism and social responsibility. The following paragraphs will provide background into why I chose this direction and why I chose to focus on Patagonia.

This project has made pushed me to be reflexive of my history with brands, communications and marketing. My brand loyalties have played a significant role in shaping my personality and self-image throughout my life. I’m originally from Roswell,
GA, twenty-ish miles north of Atlanta. My mother had worked for The Coca-Cola Company, headquartered in Atlanta, my whole life. The Coca-Cola Company is huge for the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia. So, in a sense, given my mother and the hometown Big Red Machine, the concept of brand loyalty was instilled in me before learning my ABCs.

Thinking back, there are three prominent brands I have used as a means of expression and/or to blend in with a new community. I’ve always been an athletic individual participating in basketball, volleyball, tennis, swimming and soccer throughout my childhood and high school. My freshman year in college I jumped at the opportunity to join the varsity crew team as a novice rower. That same semester the crew team received Patagonia pullovers embroidered with our names and team crest. This was my second Patagonia piece and my interest in the brand increased. There were other rowing brands to choose from but my team chose Patagonia. At regattas, I noticed teams like Princeton, Temple University, Syracuse University, etc. all wore Patagonia rowing gear. Other teams like Duke, UNC, University of Connecticut, and Georgia Tech, wore mainly Nike.

That same semester I was in Sociology 101. I remember the first day of class I sat in the middle with a couple friends I made in orientation. I distinctly remember this introduction to from our professor because it, along with the crew team, sparked my interest in Patagonia. The professor was, Professor Levine, a short woman with curly brown hair and designer glasses. She began class by acknowledging that mostly freshmen and sophomores take that class. She then continued with, “How many of you own a
North Face Jacket? *(paused waiting for hands)* What about Patagonia? *(paused again)* Ok a good number of you are wearing them now *(everyone laughs)*. If you don’t know either brand, they’re outdoors sportswear brands. You are attending a northeastern college where the majority of students are from the northeast area. By the end of your college career, you will know and most likely own some piece of item from Patagonia and/or North Face.” Everyone started laughing. This introduction stayed with me throughout my college career because from that first lecture my awareness of the two brands began to increase. As a freshman and new to a community, it was typical to look for ways to make friends and fit in. The North Face I knew of from my prep school days, but Patagonia was new. I remember my first Patagonia jacket. It was an oversized discounted burnt orange pullover. It was too big, but everyone loved it because the color was perfect for autumn.

However, my interest in Patagonia goes beyond just liking the colors and material. When I really like something, person, topic, item/product, I take it upon myself to learn everything about the product. It’s no surprise that I liked Patagonia. I like their mission, their history and current stance on social responsibility. Patagonia promotes its as a socially responsible company because it is taking initiatives for the environmental crisis. However, market research conducted in 2001 indicated that consumers did not perceive Patagonia as environmentally concerned\(^1\) despite their communication content. The issue of not being seen as a green company has been a problem even in recent years.

The aim of this thesis is to create a video public relations campaign consisting of a series of three short documentaries designed and filmed specifically for Patagonia as a means of emphasizing their corporate social responsibility related to the environmentalism. By researching the company’s brand communication strategy, contemporary market communications, and current corporate social responsibility campaigns, I will design a series of videos that emphasize and amplify the company’s mission and social responsibility.

The Public Relations Society of America defines PR as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”² With the rapid rise of digital media and the changing ways in which companies interact with the public, understanding the impact and effectiveness of communication strategies utilizing video work is a strong priority for corporations and those teaching visual messaging. Corporations, such as Patagonia, have always faced the challenge to remain relevant engaging leaders on the public stage. Since consumers have easier access to corporate activities via social media, maintenance of the public perception of the brand through contemporary mediums, like video, is essential. In the past few years, Patagonia launched films about their environmentally responsible initiatives, increased use of social media on multiple platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Vimeo, and YouTube) and increased production of digital content to show on their social media platforms (i.e. high definition photography). I think

Patagonia’s public relations corporate social responsibility campaign can benefit from another tactical approach that services the brands as well as servicing the public. This project aims to re-invigorate the awareness of the brand’s CSR campaigns.

This project is titled “The Responsible Project” as a play on Patagonia’s current self-titled image and published book “The Responsible Company” and their CSR campaign “The Responsible Economy”. The title was chosen as a means to remain consistent with Patagonia’s current image and promotional activities. This project seeks to produce promotional video content that remains true to Patagonia’s values of “build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, [and] use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.” Environmentalism is at the core of Patagonia’s brand values. So here’s my view: why not promote how the company is impacting the community. From my research of the brand and current campaigns with my studies as a strategic communications student, I have learned it is easier to shift attitudes than it is to shift behavior. Patagonia is in a interesting position to shift attitudes that in turn inspire interests, which eventual lead to behavioral shifts.

As a part of the social responsibility plan, Patagonia offers Environmental Grants to non-profits across the globe. The Grassroots Grant is important to this project the non-profits that were filmed for this project are recipients of the grant. For the 2016 fiscal

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year, $7.1 million had been donated to fund environmental work and 824 organizations received a Patagonia grant. Patagonia grants--

--fund only environmental work. We are most interested in making grants to organizations that identify and work on the root causes of problems and that approach issues with a commitment to long-term change. Because we believe that the most direct path to real change is through building grassroots momentum, our funding focuses on organizations that create a strong base of citizen support.

There are four types of Patagonia grants: corporate grants (fund projects within the U.S. and Canada, and are either national in scope or not local to a Patagonia North American retail store), retail grants (fund projects local environment non-profits that work closely with Patagonia retail stores), media grants (fund projects for groups that use media and the power of film to inspire audiences to become activists), and native fish grants (funds given to restoring and protecting native fish populations). Patagonia accepts one proposal per organization per fiscal year (May 1- April 30). The typical grant size ranges

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depending on the type of grant, but typically ranges between $5,000 to $20,000. The retail grants take place at the Patagonia retail store and deadlines can vary depending on the specific store. The criteria for a grant are as follows:

is action-oriented, is quantifiable, builds public involvement and support, is strategic in its targeting and goals, focuses on root causes, accomplishes specific goals and objectives that can be effectively measured to evaluate success, takes place within the following countries: United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, Chile, Argentina, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Norway, Luxembourg, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, Denmark, Belgium, Austria and the Czech Republic. 

I intend to produce three videos focusing on three Colorado non-profits who have received grant money from Patagonia in the past two years. I have chosen to film Keystone Science School (Keystone, CO), Boulder B-cycle (Boulder, CO), and Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (Aspen, CO). I envision this campaign as a showcase of Patagonia’s pay-it-forward mentality, where the focus is on the non-profits and their presence and leadership within their respective communities.

I chose these three organizations from a long list of Colorado-based non-profits receiving Patagonia grants based on location and availability. Although I contacted six non-profits for interest in this project, some organizations were not available or did not have enough staff to communicate with for the project. My personal interest in the non-profits played a role in the decision-making process. The Keystone Science School is a camp center for young students in elementary and middle school to attend throughout the year. They specialize in experiential learning where students and teachers learn


environmental science through experimenting in the outdoors. The school received grant money for its camp programs for students. The Aspen Center for Environmental Sciences (ACES) is similar to the Keystone Science School with the exception of also providing internships for high school and college students during the summer and winter months. ACES received grant money for its programs surrounding onsite environmental science education. Both centers focus on experiential learning and challenging the status quo of the classroom literally being in a room. This emphasis on experiential learning is what attracted me to these two organizations. Personally, I have enjoyed learning from being in the environment or applying my knowledge to a project, much like applying my learning in strategic communications and video to this project. Boulder B-cycle is different from ACES and the Keystone Science School, where its focus is on environmental sustainability through bike sharing and received grant money for growing the organization in the Boulder community. The Boulder B-Cycle program is a branch of the larger national B-Cycle program. Although Denver has the Denver B-Cycle program as well, I wanted to focus on a Boulder B-Cycle organization because of the Boulder community. The city of Boulder is outdoorsy, laidback, environmentally conscious, fit and friendly. Also, Boulder is smaller in scale to Denver: Boulder population 310, 048 as
of 2012 city data\textsuperscript{11} and Denver population is 649,495 as of 2012.\textsuperscript{12} I wanted to stay on the smaller scale for logistical reasons of shooting and to capture a different feeling of inclusivity: small town look versus metropolitan city.

The target audience for this project is two-fold: (1) Other product based corporations such as clothing and gear commodity companies and (2) current Patagonia consumers including the ones aware of Patagonia’s mission and those who wear Patagonia clothing as a fashion statement. The goal of this project is to increase awareness of Patagonia’s CSR campaigns, brand statement and role as a corporate leader in environmental advocacy. One promotional video will be created for each organization with the intent of targeting both audiences simultaneously. Essentially, the hope is this project will help inspire other corporations to get involved in their respective communities and educate current costumers on the Patagonia brand. Overall, I hope the intended minute long videos of these organizations will show how the company is impacting the national community and is indeed “The Responsible Company.”

Additionally, this project is important to the larger discussion of CSR promotion techniques because it is applying a different approach to showing how companies are socially involved. It is no surprise that corporate good deeds are important to consumers.

\textsuperscript{11} “Boulder County QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau.” \textit{Boulder County QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau}. N.p., n.d. Web. \url{http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08/0807850.html}

\textsuperscript{12} "Denver County QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau." \textit{Denver County QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau}. N.p., n.d. Web. \url{http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08/08031.html}
“70 percent of consumers indicated that they were more likely to buy from a socially responsible firm; conversely, 50 percent indicated that they would not buy from a firm that was not socially responsible.”

Although the premise of this project is not to necessarily increase profits, there is a correlation between implementation of a CSR campaign and better financial performance. Therefore this project and presentation of a differing tactical approach is beneficial to other corporations because it will provoke ideas on how to be socially involved. I also hope this project engages other corporations and consumers on the good that companies like Patagonia engage in regularly.

The following sections of this thesis will address the larger topic of branding in public relations and CSR to give contextual meaning to my project. The literature review will discuss the history and legacy of Patagonia and why this public relations campaign revamp is uniquely appropriate. Next, the literature review will analyze the ideas and theories behind brands to gain a clearer understanding of the social role of brands in promoting public relations, leading to a discussion of the social value that brands create for the public. The literature review will briefly discuss green marketing because Patagonia’s mission is a green oriented mission, the definition of corporate social responsibility, consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility promotion and


Patagonia’s current corporate social responsibility approach. These sections support the overall aim and reasoning behind my intended videos. After the review of the literature, I will include a methodology section, which will further describe of my creative idea, intended audience and budget. Following the methodology is a description of the videos and then a discussion about the process of creating the videos and what can be learned from this project.

*Patagonia, The Company and History*¹⁵

“Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to environmental crisis.”¹⁶

--Patagonia’s Mission Statement

The word *simplicity* or as one of their t-shirts says, “live simply”, conveys the overall message and strategy of the Patagonia brand. In an overtly consumer based society,¹⁷ Patagonia strives to promote the “less is more” ethos. A shirt is a good shirt if it keeps you covered, warm or cool, and lasts so you do not have to purchase multiple shirts, etc. The brand strategy stems from the connotation of the name itself. Patagonia’s essence is in simplicity and functionality. Simple beauty, functional gear, and an emphasis on the simple life, make this company unique. As Reena Jana argues:

Patagonia is the Apple of outdoor clothing. It has fan boys and girls. And the fan base is spreading, because people want coats and bags that improve their lives and

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are easy on the eyes. And they don’t mind paying more for products that have a decades-long history of pushing forward new technologies with design in mind.\textsuperscript{18}

Patagonia stresses the functionality of its products in extreme environmental conditions such as climbing, hiking, skiing or sailing, etc. As a means to characterize an extreme environment that is also beautiful in design, Chouinard chose the name Patagonia after the region in South America. Patagonia is a beautiful region shared by Chile and Argentina. It brings to mind “romantic visions of glaciers tumbling into fjords, jagged windswept peaks, gauchos and condors” and “it can be pronounced in every language.”\textsuperscript{19} The landscape of Patagonia is known as being pristine and something that should not be altered, a climber’s ultimate dream.\textsuperscript{20} I interpret the company image of living simply as having two meanings: 1. To live simply without over consuming on unnecessary products and taking what you need versus what you want and 2. To live simply as in environments being unaltered by the human impact and giving meaning to sustainability.


Produce less and consume less is at the core of Patagonia’s corporate policy. The company, founded in 1974, insists on its consumers only buying what they need versus what they want. Simplicity, functionalism and minimalism are the key components to this brand’s products, campaigns, and overall image. Patagonia is an outdoors sportswear and gear company providing products for men, women, children, and toddlers. Its clothing are some of the most expensive and innovative clothing on the market for outdoor sportswear.

The founder and corporate owner, Yvon Chouinard, prides himself on his natural curiosity and innovative improvements of products. Having started Patagonia on the premise of creating functionally simple products that did not harm the natural earth either in creating the product or in consumer use, Chouinard and the Patagonia family are the pioneers of corporate responsibility campaigns for the use of “eco-friendly materials and fabrics…and sustainable manufacturing practices.”21

The company is a great example of business values in sync with brand identity. Patagonia as a brand is in alignment with environmental awareness issues and actively seeks ways to improve its own manufacturing practices, ways to make clothing with less pollution, use of organic materials and sustainable gear, etc., as well as educate consumers and the public about the dangers our way of life has on the earth. Despite its size as a corporation and the fact that it could grow, Patagonia is a relatively small private

company based in Ventura, CA. Chouinard speaks on the company’s size in an interview with Jennifer Wang saying:

I believe there is a certain size for every endeavor…you exceed that after a while, and then you’re no longer valid. I’m always questioning what the right size is for our company. Right now, we’re too small…We’re tiny compared with what we could be…We could call Nordstrom tomorrow and sell them $20 million worth of clothes, but I don’t want to do that.\textsuperscript{22}

Patagonia is extremely well known across the United States. Its presence is “hardly a factor in Europe” according to Chouinard’s interview. However, this is not because the company is lacking qualities to expand. Chouinard has purposely kept the company from getting too big because of his business philosophy; build the best product and inspire solutions for the environmental crisis. Big business, large manufacturing companies and the over consumption tendencies of society are some of the factors related to the current environmental crisis.\textsuperscript{23} Chouinard and Patagonia are committed to eco-friendly living. Therefore, it is in their best interest and strategy to stay true to their brand identity and not “get too big”.

Patagonia’s website provides an in-depth history of the company’s earlier development beginning with Chouinard’s passion for climbing. Chouinard, originally from Maine, moved to California as an adolescent. He worked at a falconry club where the


older members taught him and the younger employees how to rock climb. Chouinard then spent every free moment, summer, and vacation, hiking and climbing in California’s national parks like Yosemite. His love for being outdoors, climbing or surfing is the premise of his business’ beginning. In the 1950s/60s, he saw ways to innovate climbing tools so that it was easier to carry. He would craft his own “reusable hardware” or climbing accessories for his climbs. His friends saw the improvements and wanted the tools as well. Using his parents’ backyard, Chouinard began producing and selling his equipment to other climbers on the beach and in the mountains. Soon enough after steady and difficult growth, along with a partnership with Tom Frost, “an aeronautical engineer”, Chouinard’s innovative equipment gained popularity to become the largest supplier of climbing equipment by 1970.

Being the innovator he is, Chouinard was not content with the improvements he made to standard climbing gear. Instead he looked for ways to improve his own developments. He and Frost realized their equipment physically damaged environment. The tools used for rock climbing were harming the natural surface of the rocks. In the Chouinard Equipment catalog issued in 1972, Doug Robinson advocated for the development of new equipment, writing:

There is a word for it, and the word is clean. Climbing with only nuts and runners for protection is clean climbing. Clean because the rock is left unaltered by the passing climber. Clean because nothing is hammered into the rock and then hammered back out, leaving the rock scarred and the next climber’s experience less natural. Clean because the climber’s protection leaves little trace of his
ascension. Clean is climbing the rock without changing it; a step closer to organic
climbing for the natural man.24

This was the beginning of Chouinard’s ethos as an innovator and as a businessman. By
changing his own products and pushing for the preservation of the natural world, he
established a company that stood for what he cared for most.

Although his company was built on the foundation of gear and equipment,
Chouinard began supplying clothing after having purchased a colorful rugby shirt from
Scotland on a climbing trip. In his recount of this purchase, during a speech to the
University of California, Santa Barbara he describes how the shirt had a collar, which
made it useful in climbing because the ropes and slings would not cut into his neck.25 The
shirt was made from a tough material and the colors, although not traditional for men to
wear in the late ‘60s, were bright. Everyone wanted one of these shirts so Chouinard
added them to his list of products.

As the company grew Chouinard and his team asked themselves challenging
questions. What is functional, what is simple, how can we wick away water, maintain
insulation, and durability in our garments, were only some of the questions posed. All of
these questions in correlation with how to be environmentally friendly when

24 "Patagonia Outdoor Clothing, Apparel and Gear for Climbing, Hiking, Surfing,
Running, Travel." Patagonia Outdoor Clothing, Apparel and Gear for Climbing, Hiking,

Lecture. The Education of a Reluctant Businessman with Yvon Chouinard. University of
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVfy2T0rzMc>.
manufacturing products drove the innovation of Chouinard and his growing team. Even today, Patagonia continually looks for ways to reduce pollution when manufacturing as well as creating quality products that last a lifetime.²⁶

As mentioned, the Patagonia name resonates with the natural beauty of the region it was named after. Partnering the name with the mission to implement environmental policy into the corporate field is a smart strategic move. The business strategy of producing durable, lifetime guaranteed, functional products and the brand image of eco-friendly, less is more, corporate and consumer responsibility for the earth, in alignment with the image of the region of Patagonia, help solidify the company’s image and mission. Its mission for simple products, reduction of chemical waste and maintaining its fight for the environment is Patagonia’s way of separating itself not only from its competitors in the outdoors sportswear industry, but from every product based company.

The consumer base for Patagonia products is the outdoorsy, natural living, maybe a Wholefoods consumer market. Chouinard, as mentioned, is an avid climber, surfer, skier, etc. so his products were built for individuals who participated in those sports. The most loyal consumer base according to the company’s website and interviews conducted with Chouinard, are the consumers whose values resonate with the company values. However, Patagonia has a second extremely loyal consumer base whom are not avid

outdoorsy people, but wear Patagonia for fashion. The next section will cover the ideas behind Patagonia as a brand and the multiple ways in which consumers utilize the brand.

*Patagonia as a Brand*

Before discussing Patagonia as a brand, what does brand exactly mean? The term *brand* carries varying connotations, good and bad. Michael Levine, author of *A Branded World*, defines branding as a “complex process.” He says branding “is the creation and development of a specific identity for a company, product, commodity, group or person.” The brand is the identity, values and traits of a company. Brand strategy is not like marketing strategy where the market strategy’s intent is how to increase profits based on the business goals. The brand is an intangible asset.

Similar to how marketing practices developed, the beginnings of contemporary branding developed as a result to the spike in mass production. There had always been

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30 Shaw, Eric H. "Marketing Strategy from the Origin of the Concept to the Development of a Conceptual Framework." *Journal O Historical Research in Marketing* 4 (2012): 30-55. Print. (Eric Shaw, a professor of marketing at Florida Atlantic University, describes in his articles how marketing developed historically as a means to cater to the masses. With the industrial revolution and booming of mass consumption as a wing-man, marketing was a necessity in managing competition as well as in maintaining business: “Marketing covers an entire discipline that contains both micro (e.g. marketing management, buyer behavior, and consumer psychology) and macro (e.g. industry, distribution channels and aggregate marketing system) perspectives.”)
some form of branding of products in the market place throughout human history. For instance, watermarks were “intended to guarantee the ‘quality’ or properties of goods and to distinguish them from goods produced by others…to guarantee quality through a mark of origin, and to imply superiority in relation to one’s competitors.”  

A corporate brand “is carefully designed to present qualities that its creators will be attractive to the public and it is meant to be developed for the long haul.”

From a purely business point of view, branding is defined as managerial evolutions starting with differentiation (how a brand differs from the competition), positioning (how a brand is positioned in the marketplace to benefit the consumer), personality (what is a brand’s perception on the marketplace, how is it received), vision (sense of direction of growth) and added value (social value of brand and the value consumers place on the brand). In other words, this means as public relations has progressed in alignment with the rise of technology, shifting social and cultural habits and a growing emphasis on the audience and the stakeholders’ perceptions of companies, the practice of branding has grown from merely differentiating products


functionality to a position of adding arbitrary value to the consumers lifestyle and well-being.

Contemporary branding thought discusses how a brand becomes a part of a person; how is the consumer’s identity shaped via association with the brand and how does the consumer add value to the brand that may not have been intended by the corporation. For instance, when I was younger I used the Nike brand as a way to place myself in the basketball community and promote myself as an athletic individual. Since I personally endorsed Nike, my other athletic friends began to do so as well. If you played basketball you wore Nikes, not Adidas. We put a prestige on Nike for basketball over Adidas and it helped us showcase that we were athletic and played sports in school.

The thought that consumers can add value to a brand is a relatively new idea but something experienced regularly in the 21st century. Adding value does not necessarily mean monetary value. Remember brands are intangible assets. Although undeniably important to the success of a company, it’s difficult to assess the economic value of a brand. Therefore, social value becomes an important contributing factor. Social value of a brand is the value the public, target markets or audience of a corporation place on the brand. It is the value held by consumers. It is a consumer creation that can either elevate the brand or lower its social worth. For example, consider the elevation of TOMs shoes versus the lowering social value of Tommy Hilfiger back in ‘90s. TOMs shoes, although created for the social awareness of the economic and social issues in developing nations,

the shoes are recognized as a fashion statement. Tommy Hilfiger, on the other hand, tried its luck at advertising to the urban and minority market in the ‘90s and in turn saw its prestige drop in social value. Social value is created and lowered for a number of uncontrollable reasons as demonstrated with the TOMs and Tommy Hilfiger brands. Another example of consumers altering the social value of a brand is Timberland boots.

36 "Locals Weigh in on TOMS Shoes Trend." The Gargoyle. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://gargoyle.flagler.edu/2011/03/locals-weigh-in-on-toms-shoes-trend/>. (College newspaper discussing the trend of TOMs shoes, "Some people wear them for the cool factor," Weaver, a fine arts and graphic design major, said. "I like them. I have a pair of botas, which are made very well. I don’t wear them because other people think they look good—I wear them for the cause. Some people don’t get it. They don’t understand how easy they have it." Flagler College junior Justin Register said he "is not opposed to the cause" behind TOMS shoes but also said he does not own a pair. "I wanted a pair," he said. “But two of my friends jumped on the trend, and I didn’t want to be in the TOMS shoes club.

37 Suddath, Claire. "Tommy Hilfiger Q&A: The Rise and Fall and Rise of a Man and His Brand." Bloomberg Business Week. Bloomberg, 18 Apr. 2014. Web. <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-04-18/tommy-hilfiger-q-and-a-the-rise-and-fall-and-rise-of-a-man-and-his-brand#p2>. (Business Week interview with Tommy Hilfiger: "Interviewer: Let’s talk a little about Tommy’s struggles over the years. You started losing a lot of money and ended up taking it private and stepping down as chairman. Tommy: Being a public company, we didn’t want to disappoint our shareholders. So we kept driving the volume. Unfortunately, there’s a pushback that happens if you oversupply the demand. That happened in the United States. It certainly was, I would say, another learning experience. Interviewer: There was a bit of controversy at the time because the classic preppy base abandoned the Tommy brand when it was adopted by the hip-hop community. And when hip-hop moved on to a new trend, you were left hanging. Tommy: Look, it fueled a lot of growth, but it took us away from our roots. We came back to our roots 10 years ago; that’s when our business started to really stabilize and grow again. When people ask me advice, I say stick to who you are. Stick to your guns. There is an image and attitude to most brands and that’s really important. I like to stick to my heritage and not chase trends and at that point we were chasing trends. Chasing trends was easy but it was dangerous. It’s more important to me now to be consistent.

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Timberland, LLC is an American sportswear and shoe company based in New Hampshire. The iconic 6” Timberland boots were meant for hiking, but were adopted by the New York City hip hop community in the 1990s, essentially becoming fashion. In a New York times article written in 1993, the author discusses the conundrum the Timberland Company felt,

In distinct contrast to the company's primary multimillion-dollar market, which buys to the call of the wild -- or at least dreams of it -- is a newer clientele, one that is plunking down considerable cash to the wildly infectious beat of hip-hop music reverberating from the inner-city canyons of New York, Chicago, Detroit and beyond...In many large inner-city neighborhoods, being wrapped in anything Timberland, from $1,000 mountain-trekking coats to $50 twill caps, bestows instant cool (and instant warmth). So much so, for instance, that Timberland boots have been edging out Nike's Air Jordan basketball sneakers as the required footwear of the inner-urban set this year, said several fashion and retail experts. In fact, they note, sneaker companies like Nike, Reebok and Adidas have been rapidly expanding their offerings to include more hiking-style boots and shoes to compete with the Timberland onslaught. But back at Timberland, which recently showed the highest quarterly revenues in its 20-year history, strategists are trying to distance their brand name from a consumer they say is buying the product for the "wrong reason" -- fashion.38

Timberland’s marketing teams struggled with the new consumer because to heavily target the hip hop market, to them meant walking away from their roots.39 The main point to show is consumer’s interpretation or use of the brand may differ from the intended use from the company. A similar case is happening with Patagonia.


Patagonia is a premium brand. The price tag of a piece of garment from Patagonia establishes it as a premium brand. The brand acts very much like the high-end fashion label. As noted earlier, Patagonia’s brand values are functionality, simplicity, corporate responsibility and activeness in the outdoors community. The firm is considered a high-end outdoors sportswear company because of their emphasis on functionality, innovative and environmentally responsible manufacturing and the high quality of materials. Yet despite the sportswear aspect, the brand sometimes socially acts as a fashion label due in large part to the price tag. This label is already exclusive in physical availability to the general public, but it is also monetarily exclusive. Purchasing this label is no small matter. So, the question to ask is have consumers incorporated the brand values into how they want to present themselves or are they creating a new idea of Patagonia’s identity as a brand? In other words, is there a disconnect in how Patagonia and the public separately see the brand?

These questions are at the heart of this project because this is where Chouinard and the Patagonia team are seeing an increase in sales. Although Patagonia is a privately held company, it’s been reported that in the fiscal year ending April 30, “Patagonia Works’ sales were $575 million, up from $543 million in 2012 and $417 million in 2011.”  


Essentially, Patagonia has their targeted consumer market of outdoors activities enthusiasts and environmentally conscious activists but also has a second large consumer base that purchases Patagonia garments. “We outgrew our loyal customer base and increasingly were selling to yuppies, posers, and wanna-bes…These people don’t need this…to get in their Jeep Cherokees and drive to Connecticut for the weekend” says Chouinard in an interview from 1992.42

These “yuppies, posers, and wanna-bes” are, in some ways, the untargeted consumer base. These consumers do not hike, rock climb, or trail run. Instead they walk their dogs in a city park, they go running on the street, they sit on their decks on chilly nights, and they drive their kids to early Saturday morning soccer games. Patagonia’s current promotional activities cater to their loyal consumer base which Chouinard admits they have outgrown. The company’s Vimeo and YouTube videos, Twitter feeds, Tumblr posts, Instagram photos, and FaceBook announcements are directed at the traditional consumer. This project seeks to be inclusive of both the loyal consumers and the “untargeted” consumers who place a different social value on Patagonia gear. The next section will discuss social value is broader detail and introduce corporate social responsibility as the premise of this project.

Corporate Social Responsibility and the Social Value of Brands

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the underlying basis of this project. However, what exactly does CSR mean? The University of California, Berkley defines CSR as “the corporate belief that a company needs to be responsible for its actions—socially, ethically and environmentally.” Additionally, the Harvard Kennedy School of Government says CSR:

Encompasses not only what companies do with their profit, but also how they make them. It goes beyond philanthropy and compliance and addresses how companies manage their economic, social, and environmental impacts, as well as their relationships in all key spheres of influence: the workplace, the marketplace, the supply chain, the community, and the public policy realm.

Alexander Dahlsrud’s article conducted a content analysis of the many CSR definitions offered and concluded that the lack of a universal definition is because of individual biases and special interests when implementing CSR. In other words, the definition depends on the company and the use of the concept.

Dahlsrud’s study coded the definitions in five dimensions. The five dimensions group together different versions of CSR messages and provides a synopsis of the


45 Alexander Dahlsrud How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: an Analysis of 37 Definitions. See Appendix I
varying types. They are 1) the environmental dimension: the natural environment, 2) the social dimension: the relationship between business and society, 3) the economic dimension: CSR in terms of business operations, 4) the stakeholder dimension: referring to stakeholder groups and 5) the voluntariness dimension: actions not prescribed by law.\textsuperscript{46} The dimensions to consider for this project are the environmental and social dimensions. These two dimensions are the main focus primarily Patagonia promotes environmental good and advocates for sustainable manufacturing practices as a means to bettering society. Given these characteristics the environmental and social dimensions seem appropriate.

This project will use the definition of CSR as “the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life.”\textsuperscript{47} The purpose of corporate social responsibility is to “reflect the organization’s status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations.”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} Alexander Dahlsrud \textit{How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: an Analysis of 37 Definitions}. See Appendix I


In a study titled *The Safety of Objects: Materialism, Existential Insecurity, and Brand Connection*, college students were surveyed about their brand loyalties and connections. Brand connection is defined as “the extent to which a consumer has incorporated a brand into his or her self-concept”\(^49\) and materialism as “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life [as constructed by Richins and Dawson].”\(^50\) The study brings up very interesting points about a person’s relationship with brands and products, and identifies that brands and products act as a distraction, much like a religion, from the human fear of mortality. Brands can act as security blankets, community builders and, according to contemporary public relations and marketing thought, the new symbol of higher power; “self-brand connections foster security [and help] establish predictable routines.”\(^51\)

As Susan Fournier explains in her study of three women’s brand loyalties, consumers have relationships with brands. For Fournier, brands are considered extensions of the self, “our bodies, our values and character, our success and competence, our social


roles, our traits and our possessions.” Fournier discusses this relationship on a personal level, however the branding relationship is far more than a personal matter. Brands can also provide a sense of security in the marketplace. The brand-consumer relationship is a long-term relationship established by family ties, personal interest, or communal influence as Fournier discusses. Brand longevity is something branding professionals are constantly working towards in order to maintain the long-term relationship.

The “cultural power, economic clout, and global reach” of brands may also have beneficial effects. Brands are icons, symbols of values, and can act as leaders in the public forum. Brands have the power to spark cultural discussions, implement social responsibility campaigns and tackle social issues. Consider Patagonia’s invested interest in the environmental crisis. Steve Hilton describes this as the social leadership of brands. Hilton says companies are pressured to implement corporate social responsibility campaigns due to their role as public leaders. Since the actions of the company are much more widely seen in the 21st century, companies like McDonald’s, Nike and Shell (Hilton’s examples) have to be aware of their public image, not only in terms of how they conduct business, but also in how they are contributing to the public. There is an expectation for companies to be publically involved.


Patagonia is a social and corporate leader in CSR and environmentalism. Patagonia has the social clout to communicate across cultural platforms as well as social groups within those cultures. Steve Hilton states:

Three dimensions of corporate social leaderships—harnessing cultural power, harnessing innovation and campaigning for social change—are often best demonstrated by the brands that have used a social or environmental platform to define and differentiate themselves in the marketplace.55

Building off of this idea of social leadership, Steve Vargo suggests the value of a brand is not necessarily reliant upon market shares or profitability. Consumers embrace brands as ways to identify their community. The argument is brands do not create communities. On the contrary, communities accept brands. To put this idea into context, Patagonia did not create outdoors enthusiasts; the community embraced Patagonia. Additionally, the “untargeted” consumers who purchase Patagonia apparel are using the brand to identify within their respective communities. Melissa Akaka and Jennifer Chandler build off of Vargo’s concept to develop a theory of value co-creation through brand social positioning and social roles.56 Akaka and Chandler analyze how active brands are given social roles based on their positioning in the public. A brand is co-created by the company and the consumers who value the brand. The Timberland boots example is evidence of this idea of co-creation.


In today’s modern marketplace, companies feel it is imperative to incorporate CSR activities in business strategies.\textsuperscript{57} According to a study analyzing consumer reactions to CSR initiatives, there are six categories of CSR activities companies tend to participate in: 1) community support, 2) diversity, 3) employee support, 4) environment, 5) non-U.S. operations and 6) products.\textsuperscript{58} Patagonia’s CSR initiatives include community support, environment and non-U.S. operations (in their manufacturing processes).

CSR research sheds some light on how it is now trendy for companies to implement CSR campaigns and how the trend maybe causing consumer skepticism.\textsuperscript{59} In a study researching promotion of CSR campaigns on consumers’ perceptions, consumer skepticism is usually related to how long the company has been committed to its CSR plan and what has the company been able to achieve.\textsuperscript{60} “This commitment is reflected in a marketplace survey which found 74% of respondents [are] more likely to attend to a


company’s overall message when they see that the company has a deep commitment to a cause.”

Although research shows that companies with a long history in CSR related campaigns receive less skepticism from consumers, consumer distrust of CSR promotion is an issue for this project, regardless. Now, Patagonia has a long history in CSR initiatives and the audiences for this project do not fully distrust Patagonia’s claims. Instead, this project takes the stance that the untargeted Patagonia consumer simply does not know or does not empathize with Patagonia’s current CSR communications. CSR research into the consumers suggests that consumers’ knowledge of CSR campaigns of their most used brands is quite low. In other words, there are consumers who purchase specific brands for years, but might not know what other activities the companies participate.

Prior CSR research indicates that CSR can help build brand reputation. A study testing consumer attitudes and behavioral purchases when exposed to a company’s good or bad social behaviors was conducted under the premise that a company’s social actions


have an impact “on driving consumers’ purchasing decisions” in addition to price, quality of services and brand familiarity. Additionally, research has shown that what consumers know about a company can influence attitudes towards the company and its products, and “negative CSR associations ultimately can have a detrimental effect on overall product evaluations.”

Given the research suggesting that CSR activities can have a impact on consumers perception of a brand and its product, there then is a suggestion that CSR has the potential to affect the financial successes of a company. There is not much literature to support that claim, however in practice it seems to ring true. For example, Patagonia published an ad during Black Friday November 2011 called “Don’t Buy This Jacket.” This advert received significant press coverage and was an interesting counter to traditional advertisements.

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The advert was a bold move from Patagonia especially given it was published on one of the largest retail days of the year. The original ad posted on Black Friday was the grey jacket with a short article saying,

It’s Black Friday, the day in the year retail turns from red to black and starts to make real money. But Black Friday, and the culture of consumption it reflects, puts the economy of natural systems that support all life family in the red. We’re now using the resources of one-and-a-half planets on our one and only planet. Because Patagonia wants to be in business for a good long time—and leave a world inhabitable for our kids—we want to do the opposite of every other business today. We ask you to buy less and to reflect before you spend a dime on their jacket or anything else.

Environmental bankruptcy, as with corporate bankruptcy, can happen very slowly, then all the sudden. This is what we face unless we slow down, the reverse the damage. We’re running short on fresh water, topsoil, fisheries, wetlands—all our planet’s natural systems and resources that support business, and life, including our own.

The environmental cost of everything we make is astonishing. Consider the R2 Jacket shown, one of our best sellers. To make it required 135 liters of water, enough to meet the daily needs (three glasses a day) or 45 people. Its journey form its origin as 60% recycled polyester to our Reno warehouse generated nearly 20 pounds of carbon dioxide, 24 times the weight of the finished product. This jacket left behind, on its way to Reno, two-thirds weight in waste.

And this is 60% recycled polyester jacket, knit and sewn to a high standard; it is exceptionally durable, so you won’t have to replace it as often. And when it comes to end of its useful life we’ll take it back to recycle into a product of equal value. But, as is true of all the things we can make and you can buy, this jacket comes with an environmental cost higher than its price.

There is much to be done and plenty for us all to do. Don’t buy what you don’t need. Think twice before you by anything. Go to Patagonia.com/CommonThreads or scan the QR code below. Take the Commons Threads Initiative pledge, and join us in the fifth “R” to reimagine a world where we take only what nature can replace.  

67 “Don’t Buy this Jacket.” Patagonia Web.
This advert was powerful in its delivery and boldness, however what resulted was not what Patagonia had intended. As a result of the advert, sales for Patagonia throughout the following year increased substantially by about 30%.\(^{68}\) Then the following year in 2013, sales increased by another 6%. Again, it is important to note that the research does not suggest there is a direct correlation between CSR and purchasing behavior. However, the research does suggest CSR can indirectly influence consumers’ intentions to purchase.\(^{69}\)

The Patagonia advert is exceptionally direct in communicating the company’s values. As discussed earlier in this thesis, this project thinks the “untargeted” consumer does not know about Patagonia’s CSR or do not empathize with the initiatives. In a study analyzing corporate brand dominance, “the visibility of a company’s corporate brand in product communications,”\(^{70}\) the experiment focuses on consumer’s reactions to CSR when the corporate brand is at the forefront versus when the corporate brand is partnered with another brand (typically a sub-brand of the corporate brand, i.e. Sprite and The


Coca-Cola Company). The results of study suggested that “CSR associations are most effective when companies use an endorsed strategy,” endorsed strategy is when two brand names are used versus just the one corporate brand (monolithic). When the corporate brand is used as an endorser and is not dominantly visible, the CSR association is perceived to be stronger. This project is taking on the endorsement model. The intended videos are meant to document the non-profits and the work they do on their own in the hopes of appealing to the “untargeted” consumer. The non-profits are acting essentially as sub-brands of Patagonia, which allow the Patagonia brand to act as an endorser and remain modest in their CSR efforts.

Patagonia’s Past CSR Campaigns

Communications related to CSR are the combination of the public relations (PR) positioning and brand statements bundled together for the audience consumption. The appropriateness of a CSR campaign is graded on its relevance and alignment with the company’s social positioning. Since this project is a PR campaign meant to emphasize Patagonia’s CSR, we need to understand what PR means.


Public relations as described by Professors Lawrence W. Long and Vincent Hazelton, “a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals.”

Deborah Bowker analyzes public relations in branding and states:

The task of PR is not to echo the marketing message, but to build on it through a range of stories that might involve local relationships, marketplace innovations, corporate responsibility and business results. PR should connect the dots between the product and citizenship, bottlers and community relationships…PR gives “legs” and life to brand attributes and the essential brand promise…This is all the more important in an evolving media and business environment.

To reiterate, the target audiences for this project are: (1) other product based corporations such as clothing and gear commodity companies and (2) current Patagonia consumers, including the core consumers and the “untargeted” consumers. The intent is to have one video per organization that educates and inspires both audiences.

The Common Threads Initiative is a CSR campaign that began in 2005, where the company would invite customers to send back old, worn-out clothing to recycle and reuse the material. There are five R’s the campaign pledges to abide by and asks consumers to do the same. Reduce: Patagonia makes long lasting gear and consumers do not buy what they do not need. Repair: Patagonia will repair gear and consumers will send in what


needs to be repaired as opposed to buying something new or throwing the gear away. Reuse: Patagonia will find places for unwanted gear and consumers will sell, send back, or pass their gear on to other people when they no longer want to use it. Recycle: Patagonia will take back worn out gear and consumers will not throw gear away to be put in a landfill. Reimagine: both parties will “imagine a world where we take only what nature can replace.”

Patagonia has always been an active member in the outdoors community, promoting environment friendly equipment when climbing, recycling, conservation, etc. As “The Responsible Company”, corporate responsibility has been an important focus for the company. The Common Threads Partnership is the most recognizable initiative of Patagonia and is an audience participation program where consumers pledge to not buy what they do not need. Similar to the message discussed in the print ad from Black Friday, Common Threads is about implementing the act of not buying unnecessary products. However, in addition asking consumers to not purchase items they do not need, Patagonia pledges to repair and reuse old gear if the consumer chooses to part from it.

“Don’t Buy This Jacket” advert was an awareness campaign. That advert certainly raised the brand’s social position (people, press included, were confused and interested and the advert received Ad of the Day in AdWeek). This is a form of social marketing (i.e.


promoting for a change in consumer behavior for the betterment of societal norms. Social marketing “seeks to utilize tools, techniques and concepts derived from commercial marketing in pursuit of social goals.” Yet, although the company’s intention was less consumption, the campaign resulted in more profits. “Patagonia’s provocative effort is not without precedent. Its Black Friday advert from 2011 featuring the tagline “Don’t buy this jacket” contributed to a 30% sales bump.”

The company has a strong presence on social media sites such as Instagram, Tumblr, Facebook and Twitter. They share stories from outdoor enthusiasts, magnificent photos, and helpful environmental information. Yet, in addition to creating content for social media, Patagonia also awards environmental grants, called the Grassroots Grant, to non-profits across the world who are, at the grassroots level to innovative groups [and] mobilize their communities to take action. We fund activist who take radical and strategic steps to protect habitat, oceans and waterways, wilderness and biodiversity…support people working on the frontlines of the environmental crisis.

The Grassroots Grant is important to this project the non-profits that were filmed for this project are recipients of the grant. For the 2016 fiscal year, $7.1 million had been donated


to fund environmental work and 824 organizations received a Patagonia grant.\textsuperscript{81}

Patagonia grants--

--fund only environmental work. We are most interested in making grants to organizations that identify and work on the root causes of problems and that approach issues with a commitment to long-term change. Because we believe that the most direct path to real change is through building grassroots momentum, our funding focuses on organizations that create a strong base of citizen support.\textsuperscript{82}

There are four types of Patagonia grants: corporate grants (fund projects within the U.S. and Canada, and are either national in scope or not local to a Patagonia North American retail store)\textsuperscript{83}, retail grants (fund projects local environment non-profits that work closely with Patagonia retail stores)\textsuperscript{84}, media grants (fund projects for groups that use media and the power of film to inspire audiences to become activists)\textsuperscript{85}, and native fish grants (funds given to restoring and protecting native fish populations)\textsuperscript{86}. Patagonia accepts one proposal per organization per fiscal year (May 1- April 30). The typical grant size ranges


depending on the type of grant, but typically ranges between $5,000 to $20,000. The retail grants take place at the Patagonia retail store and deadlines can vary depending on the specific store. The criteria for a grant are as follows:

is action-oriented, is quantifiable, builds public involvement and support, is strategic in its targeting and goals, focuses on root causes, accomplishes specific goals and objectives that can be effectively measured to evaluate success, takes place within the following countries: United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, Chile, Argentina, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Norway, Luxembourg, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, Denmark, Belgium, Austria and the Czech Republic.  

Beginning around September 2013, Patagonia has been taking steps in becoming more active in its presence and role as The Responsible Company. Joy Howard was also recently hired in the later months of 2013 to head global marketing across all sales channels and communication platforms with the goal of widening Patagonia’s initiatives and brand extensions. Although not specifically Howard’s doing, to show how the company is making strides to become more prevalent, Patagonia produced a thirty minute video Worn Wear. Worn Wear is a promotional video about Patagonia customers and their old Patagonia gear that has lasted through generations, expeditions, sailing trips, and


everyday walking the dog wear. The film builds off of Patagonia’s Tumblr blog of posting blog testimonials from consumers, documenting what the Patagonia brand means for them. In addition to this film, Patagonia helped fund a feature length documentary *DamnNation* (2014) and Chouinard is credited as an Executive Producer:

This powerful film odyssey across America explores the sea change in our national attitude from pride in big dams as engineering wonders to the growing awareness that our own future is bound to the life and health of our rivers. Dam removal has moved beyond the fictional Monkey Wrench Gang to go mainstream. Where obsolete dams come down, rivers bound back to life, giving salmon and other wild fish the right of return to primeval spawning grounds, after decades without access.  

In a short article written by Joan Voight for *AdWeek*, Voight discussed Patagonia’s Anti-Growth marketing position. The idea of Anti-Growth is not new given Patagonia’s history. However, it’s recently that the company has begun to take a serious social position on the issue of corporate responsibility and anti-growth in terms of environmentalism. The last time *AdWeek* wrote about Patagonia was for Black Friday 2011. Voight covered the company in September 2013 as Patagonia began rolling out it’s “The Responsible Economy” campaign in which targets the consumption cycle.  

Chouinard wrote an essay about the campaign explaining his opposition to the consumption cycle.

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The criticism with this stance on anti-growth is, is this just a marketing ploy? According to Voight, it is not. The anti-growth campaign understands that it cannot alter the consumption cycle, just yet. Instead it’s altering what is sold. In the Chicago, Seattle, Palo Alto, and Portland stores, Patagonia has begun selling used Patagonia gear and plans to conduct a national rollout later in 2014. This is important to this public relations campaign because these steady steps taken by Patagonia show there is recognition of a problem in terms of sales growth with an anti-growth campaign. This project seeks to showcase Patagonia’s efforts as a leader in the global community by taking a different approach to their CSR efforts. Instead of promoting ways in which Patagonia as a company is an environmental advocate, this project will turn the focus onto the Patagonia Grassroots grant-awarded organizations throughout the community who are also working towards the communal good. I think this approach is a subtle way of emphasizing Patagonia’s corporate responsibility to both consumers and other corporations across the nation. In other words, this campaign says “Look at what we as a community care about” or even, “Look how we fit into the community we care about” versus “Look at what we’re doing. You should be doing this too.”

Green Marketing and Consumer Perceptions

Patagonia’s branding is a form of green marketing. Green marketing is derived from social marketing, however, the two are not analogous. According to Michaela Zint and Rob Frederick, green marketing “is a reflection of corporate values and concerns

about their impact on the natural environment” and is “recommended when the environmental strategy of a firm is proactive or innovative.” In short, green marketing is the promotion of green products such as environmentally friendly kitchen cleaner while social marketing is the promotion of social goals such environmental awareness. Concern for the environmental is at the core of Patagonia’s brand statement and corporate pursuits. Zint and Frederick wrote an article titled *Marketing and Advertising a ‘Deep Green’ Company: The Case of Patagonia, Inc.*, in which they analyze Patagonia’s consumer perceptions, marketing strategy and advertising strategy. According to their research, green advertising must meet the following criteria:

1) Explicitly or implicitly address the relation between a product/service and the biophysical environment
2) Promote a green lifestyle with or without highlighting a product/service
3) Presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility.

Green advertising and green marketing are typically received with much criticism because of the issue of corporate ‘greenwashing’. Greenwashers are companies “with less than adequate environmental performance…which misrepresent their environmental performance through advertising.”

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Patagonia is not a greenwashing company, but due to the number of false adverts and marketing regarding environmental campaigns, truly environmental companies are subject to scrutiny. Greenwashing is an ethical issue for all companies because claiming products are environmentally friendly without scientific evidence or simply designing a label that appears “green” hurts the market as a whole more than it helps that specific company. Consumers become desensitized and will not believe any green claim regardless of actual validity.⁹⁷ Despite the growth of desensitization to green claims, the green trend has convinced companies to go green because of the potential profit benefits, favorable government policies and manufacturing long-term cost savings.⁹⁸

In 2001, Patagonia conducted market research and learned its consumers did not perceive the company as active in the environmental debate.⁹⁹ As previously discusses, Patagonia is a ‘deep green’ company:

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⁹⁷ Neff, Jack. "Consumers Don't Believe Your Green Ad Claims, Survey Finds." Advertising Age News RSS. N.p., 16 Sept. 2013. Web. (“The percentage of consumers who say they don't know if companies' environmental claims are accurate doubled to 22% between 2008 and 2013 in GfK's annual Green Gauge tracking survey. The percentage who said they don't know how well businesses fulfill their responsibility to the environment tripled to 10% over the same period.”)


environmental values are at the core of their existence as a business…[they] strive to be green whether it is popular or not, [they] try to integrate environmental considerations into all areas of decision-making, and seek out opportunities to meet the needs of green consumers.\textsuperscript{100}

The current Patagonia business model leverages high-knowledge consumers who receive and/or know of Patagonia’s environmental commitment.\textsuperscript{101} In response to the 2001 study, Patagonia chose to make sure its communications spoke to the core consumers that we acknowledged earlier. However, what about the “untargeted” consumers Chouinard acknowledged who purchase Patagonia for fashion and looks? We are missing information on them.

The current Patagonia consumer is typically male, ages 25-34, married (50.86%), college educated, and has an annual income between $40k-$70k per year. This consumer is most interested in apparel and fashion, and then the most popular within that category amongst this consumer is athletic apparel. The top competitors vying for the same consumer are The North Face, Petzl, Lululemon Athletica, Nike and The Orvis Company. This consumer also shows a high interest in media, websites and NPR. The consumer also typically lives in cities like Seattle, Portland, D.C., Durham, NC and Denver.\textsuperscript{102}


This project is a CSR strategy that focuses on the management and amplification of the brand. In addition to the core consumer discussed earlier, there is another consumer base of Patagonia that if on receiving end of these videos, could be influenced to become social activists for the environment. This project aims to influence other companies and consumers about the non-profit work happening in their communities in the hopes of inspiring them to take actions themselves. Not only will these videos showcase Patagonia’s efforts in the community to consumers, but will show other corporations ways they can also get involved in communal environmental efforts.
Chapter Two: The Responsible Project Methodology

Throughout the literature review, we discussed Patagonia as a brand in terms of company history, corporate brand, social value, corporate social responsibility and green marketing. Utilizing the literature and building on current consumer insights about Patagonia, this project aims to amplify the brand message to more consumers and other corporations about the non-profit work being conducted in their local communities. Patagonia currently has videos that speak to eco-friendly initiatives in deep-sea fishing, surfing, and skiing, etc. These videos are linked through the company website on Vimeo and YouTube. Patagonia is very active on social media sites like Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook. My suggestions for a new tactical approach for the company’s communications build upon their current CSR campaigns and seek to inspire.

Yvon Chouinard built the company on the premise of functionality and simplicity. He is an innovative businessman who sought changes even when current business was operating smoothly. He is constantly looking for ways to improve his products functionally and for the betterment of the environment. The company’s success has come from always looking for ways to improve despite currently being successful. This project is not saying Patagonia is unsuccessful in its current CSR campaigns or promotional videos. Instead, this project is offering a new perspective on how to promote the company’s image and good-doings. Just because their current promotion on social media
is arguably successful, this does not mean there is no room for innovation, creativity and improvement. Chouinard’s history in creating the Patagonia brand is a testament to this justification. Creativity in this field and for this project are a matter of how inspired are the final products. Appropriateness and originality of the final product are judged in how well the videos remains on target with the brand statement and how well it appeals to Patagonia’s current consumer base and other product-based corporations.

The following is a creative brief for the campaign, meant to be a quick overview of the intended campaign, including strategy, background and what the campaign needs to do for the client.

Creative Brief:

Questions to ask throughout project:

1. How can the recipients of Patagonia’s grants be used as the focus of the promotional videos and enhance Patagonia’s brand identity as a socially aware corporation?

2. By shifting the focus of the video campaign, how can Patagonia distinguish themselves in the eyes of other corporations as a legitimate green company?

3. By shifting the focus of the video campaign, how can Patagonia influence other corporations to engage in green production and distribution practices?

4. By shifting the focus of the video campaign, how can Patagonia distinguish themselves in the eyes of their current consumers as a legitimate green company and promote their corporate image as “The Responsible Company”?
5. How can Patagonia make access to its efforts as a green company and promotion of green issues readily available?

**Campaign Objective:** (1) To increase corporate awareness of Patagonia’s CSR campaigns, brand statement and role as a corporate leader in environmental advocacy amongst other product based corporations within the next 2 years by 10%. (2) To educate Patagonia’s current consumer base of the company’s CSR campaigns, brand statement and role as a corporate leader in environmental advocacy within the next 2 years by 20%.

**Campaign Strategy:** Create a series of promotional videos focusing on non-profits who are Patagonia grant recipients.

**Client:** Patagonia

**Product/Service:** CSR initiatives, $4,364,774 of corporate money in forms of 818 grants go to environmental non-profits in 17 countries

**Market Background:** Patagonia, outdoors sportswear company, promotes via informational print media, promotional videos and social media advocacy. However, the company has not made an “Ad Splash” in the press since November 2011.

**Competition:** The North Face

- REI
- Mountain Hardware
- Columbia
- Eddie Bauer
Media: Video

Target Audience(s):

1. Other product based corporations
2. Current Patagonia consumers, including the ones aware of Patagonia’s mission and those who wear Patagonia clothing as a fashion statement

Proposition: “The Responsible Company” is truly responsible in aiding non-profits across the world to engage in educational outreach, activism and environmentalism for multiples of communities.

Proposition Support Points:

1. They give corporate profits to non-profits in forms of grants
2. The non-profits are doing amazing work with grant money received
3. They initiate internal CSR programs for their organization
4. The company is regarded as a leader in CSR implementations amongst corporations
5. Environmentalism is a worldwide issue and needs addressing

Tone of Voice: Filming: Boulder B-Cycle, Keystone Science School and Aspen Center for Environmental Studies

1. Boulder B-Cycle, Boulder, CO: operates a bike-share system for the city of Boulder, promoting transportation solution that’s green, healthy, sustainable, and fun.
   a. **Tone:** Fun, spritely, fast
2. **Keystone Science School, Keystone, CO**: a residential, field science school that challenges students to develop critical thinking skills as they explore nature and science education.
   a. **Tone**: Fun, spritely, upbeat

3. **Aspen Center for Environmental Studies, Aspen, CO**: works to inspire a lifelong commitment to the earth by promoting environmental responsibility.
   a. **Tone**: serene, philosophical, calm

**Mandatories**: The point is not to focus on selling a product but selling the message of these non-profits’ work. Informing the target audiences of Patagonia’s true advocacy for the simple lifestyle. The campaign is to show and educate the target audiences of another facet of Patagonia’s CSR initiatives and demonstrate ways the corporations can emulate. The objective is to “show” versus “tell”.

**Evaluation**: It is beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate if the objectives have been reached. However, if an evaluation were conducted the following methods would provide insight into the effectiveness of the videos and determine if the objectives were met.

1. Test screenings and observation of audiences prior to viewing videos and again afterwards
2. Survey test audiences
3. Google Analytics on website and social media traffic on the sites as a whole and also on specific content related to environmentalism/CSR activities
4. Track press and media coverage throughout the duration of the project
5. Interview companies and partnering organizations on thoughts about the videos and Patagonia’s image

The style of the videos seeks to remain consistent with Patagonia’s current style in video production: high definition, majestic landscapes, serene settings, action, long shots, steady pacing (not too fast like competitor ads), natural light and high contrast. Given the two audiences, corporations and current consumers, the videos need to visually look like previous Patagonia videos. This style has worked for the company because it emphasizes the natural beauty of the environment, the editing does not seek to juxtapose multiple different shots and actions and instead lets the viewers’ eye glaze on the landscape.

The style is reminiscent of the company’s brand identity and focus on simplicity and functionality. I would characterize their style as straightforward in terms of shot choices and editing techniques. I plan on utilizing this style to the best of my ability in the effort to remain consistent with current Patagonia videos. However, as oppose to the talking head method where I interview people on camera, these videos will include a voice over describing the non-profits, who they are, what they do, how they operate and end on a line expressing gratitude towards Patagonia and the Grassroots Grant Program.

The focus throughout the videos is on the non-profits although they will mention Patagonia’s Grassroots. Storyboards are included in the appendix of this document showing the intended visuals ideas of the videos.

The objective of these videos, in reiterated terms, is to inspire corporations to actively engage with their respective communities and/or learn new CSRs campaign
ideas via Patagonia’s example, and educate consumers on what the Patagonia brand truly means. After seeing the videos, I want corporations to think about the ways they can contribute to their communities and possibly re-vamp their own CSR campaigns. As opposed to telling corporations that Patagonia is a leader in CSR initiatives and why they should be involved in their communities, the videos will show ways these corporations can get involved, if they are not already, or inspire new campaigns. As for the consumer audience, I want consumers to feel engaged, proud, and inspired by the Patagonia brand. The main goal for this audience is to educate the consumer base, skeptical, unknowing and loyal, about the Patagonia brand and its commitment to environmentalism, simplicity and communal sustainability. This project seeks to inspire a positive attitude towards companies like Patagonia by utilizing the endorsement strategy of CSR by focusing on the good work of the non-profits and Patagonia supporting their work.

In addition to two audiences discussed, there is a byproduct audience for the final product: video students in higher education with an interest in creative marketing, public relations, advertising and/or communications. The promotional videos will be 60-second videos for the non-profits discussed above with the overarching Patagonia brand placed into the messaging, indicating endorsement. I will work with three non-profits and create a video for each organization that is specific to their personality and activism, attempting to replicate the style of the Patagonia’s current video work.

As previously discussed, Dahlsrud’s study of CSR definitions discussed the five dimensions of CSR,\textsuperscript{104} 1) the environmental dimension: the natural environment, 2) the social dimension: the relationship between business and society, 3) the economic dimension: CSR in terms of business operations, 4) the stakeholder dimension: referring to stakeholder groups and 5) the voluntariness dimension: actions not prescribed by law.\textsuperscript{105} The focus for this project is on the environmental and social dimensions. Since, the overall objective for this project is to increase awareness of Patagonia’s CSR campaigns, brand statement and role as a corporate leader in environmental advocacy, the environmental and social elements are appropriate. The videos will show how Patagonia operates socially to promote environmental awareness and activism. The following is a budget for the project.

\textit{Budget}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Items} & \textbf{Cost} \\
\hline
Camera equipment (camera, tripod, audio, memory cards) & $0.00 own \\
GoPro rental & $64.00 for two weeks \\
B-Cycle bike rental & $8.00 for 24hours \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{104} Alexander Dahlsrud \textit{How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: an Analysis of 37 Definitions}. See Appendix I

\textsuperscript{105} Alexander Dahlsrud \textit{How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: an Analysis of 37 Definitions}. See Appendix I
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel (gas)</td>
<td>$50.00 to Keystone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$75.00 to Aspen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$15.00 to Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-production equipment (Final Cut Studio and Adobe Creative Suite)</td>
<td>$0.00 own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Approximate Total:** $212.00

My personal interests in this project stems from a long interest in commercialism, my education in film production, art history, media studies and communications, and my desired career path in marketing, brand management, corporate communications. I intend to use this project as part of my professional portfolio.
Chapter Three: Description of Videos

The following section is a description of the videos created for The Responsible Project. Each video is one minute in length and shot on a Nikon DSLR D90 and/or GoPro Hero 3. The editing software used for these videos was Adobe Creative Suite utilizing Illustrator and Photoshop, Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro 7.

Keystone Science School

The video opens with a title page fade introducing “The Responsible Project” and the certified B-Corporation logo in the bottom left hand corner. As the project title fades, the Keystone Science School logo appears and upbeat royalty free rock music begins. The next shot features a group of children running towards the low angled camera with a quick cut to the Keystone Science School sign. A voice over begins,

It’s important to us to teach leadership skills to young people, teachers and community members through hands on field experiences. Patagonia grant funds go towards developing our sustainability programming and how we think outside the classroom. We’re about science, adventure and having fun.

Throughout the voice over, shots of children and adults hiking, listening to group instructions, studying natural sciences, and participating in group activities, etc. are juxtaposed together in the effort to articulate how the Keystone Science School adds value to the community. The video ends with a group of teachers cheering at the end of a successful lesson and fades into the Keystone Science School logo and contact
In a deliberate choice to create consistency in the project in terms of stylistic choices within the videos, this video opens the same as the Keystone Science School video. The title card fades in with “The Responsible Project” then fades out a second later as the Aspen Center for Environment Sciences logo fades in. Upbeat rock music, reminiscent of the Keystone video, begins as the first shot of the video features a welcome sign to ACES. The following images cut between long landscape shots of the center, children playing with the animals, and the majestic beauty of mountains surrounding Aspen. Throughout the video a female voice speaks,

Our mission is to inspire a life long commitment to the earth by educating for environmental responsibility, conserving and restoring the balance of natural communities.
We work to educate children and community leaders that the earth must be respected and nurtured.
Patagonia’s grant helps support our efforts in having a positive impact.

The video concludes with children playing by a river and a young boy chucking a rock.
The shot fades into white and the Aspen Center for Environmental Sciences logo and contact information. The logo then fades and “The Responsible Project” title card reappears to close the video.

_Boulder B-Cycle_

The video begins similar to Keystone and ACES; opening with a fade into “The Responsible Project” and a fade out that transitions into fade in of the Boulder B-Cycle logo. The now familiar rock music gradually increases in volume and the video enters its
first shot with an upward tilt of a B-Cycle bike in front of the Boulder Patagonia store. A male voice over cuts in is overlaid throughout the video.

Bike sharing is becoming more popular as we start to look towards creating clean, sustainable, healthy transportation. B-Cycle in Boulder is fun and easy to use even if you’re new to bike sharing. We were awarded a grant from Patagonia to continue building bike sharing and educating the community about why sustainable transportation is important for our future.

Throughout the voice over, the camera then shows an up-close shot of the B-Cycles lined up in the designated bike racks. The video then cuts to a POV shot of walking up to the B-Cycle kiosk, entering a credit card, choosing a bike and successfully renting the bike. The following shots take on POV stop motion aesthetic; quick cuts while riding around the town of Boulder. In between the POV stop motion shots are panning shots, long shots from the sidewalks, and tracking shots from a vehicle of people riding the B-Cycles throughout the town. The video cuts back and forth between these multiple perspectives and then concludes before the title cards with a repeating tilt of the B-Cycle logo on a bike to the Boulder Patagonia store front. The image fades into a title card of the Boulder B-Cycle logo, contact information and asterisk note expressing a special thanks to Boulder B-Cycle for lending the vehicle tracking footage of the cyclists. The B-Cycle logo title card fades to “The Responsible Project” logo.
Chapter Four: Critical Reflection, Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this thesis was to merge what I have learned about video production and public relations and create a public relations campaign consisting of a series of promotional videos filmed specifically for Patagonia, the outdoors sportswear company, while reflecting on their corporate social responsibility (CSR). The videos created for this project were meant to suggest another route for Patagonia to increase its communication of its CSR activities to a broader audience. I created three public service messages featuring three Colorado non-profit organizations tied to Patagonia through its Growing Grassroots Grant program. In this chapter, I will reflect critically on 1) the process of making the videos, 2) the goals I hoped to achieve with the videos, 3) the videos themselves and 4) the tension between CSR and profitability. Finally, I will discuss feedback I would offer Patagonia and other companies in their efforts to do CSR that is truly in the public good. I will start by reflecting on the process of creating the videos.

Critical Reflection of Videos

Prior to shooting the videos, I scheduled meetings with representatives of each of the organizations. The first organization I met was the Keystone Science School. I had talked with a member of their marketing team over the phone about my project, their Patagonia grant, and the potential to include my video on their digital channels. The team invited me to visit the center in the winter of 2013. My first visit was a photo scouting
visit on a cold sunny day. The team walked me around the campus, showed me the cabins
where students and faculty slept when attending their programs, the observatory and
kitchen areas, etc. I took photos of the area and asked team members questions in order to
develop a shot list for my next visit.

The thought process behind this video was to capture moments where students
were learning, experiencing their surroundings, and engaging with their instructors in
order to showcase the school’s personality. My initial photo scouting visit allowed me to
put together a storyboard. Utilizing my storyboard, I was able to capture a wide range of
activity: shots ranging from mountain tops, cross-country skiing, indoors learning, etc.
giving me a wide array of shots to highlight in the video.

I visited the Keystone Science School many times after that first visit. My most
notable visit to the school was in March 2014. I was scheduled to drive from Denver,
Colorado to Keystone, Colorado at 8am to film with a new group of students coming to
visit. This filming session was complicated from the beginning. Due to car trouble, I had
to borrow my friend’s Prius that proved to be a fascinating driving experience since a
snowstorm was brewing in the mountain regions. So, what started as a decent drive in
Denver, slowly developed into an icy hazardous drive by the time I reached Georgetown,
Colorado.

Prius and all, I somehow made it to Keystone as the snow rolled inward. The
students were traveling in from Denver as well, but left a tad later. The roads had iced
over so badly that highway patrol shut down interstate 70 at Georgetown twenty minutes
after I had driven through, leaving the students stuck on a bus to wait out the conditions.
Staff members at Keystone and I waited another 2 hours before the students arrived. By that time, six inches of snow had fallen.

Despite the delayed start to the shoot, the students participated in ice-breaker activities with the school staff, learned about the formulation of snow, skied cross-country and had snack time. I knew I wanted to capture the students focusing on their work and/or their instructors, so throughout the whole day, I tried to position myself in corners of the rooms and film with my telephoto lens as not to distract anyone. However, the mere sight of camera sparked the students’ interests that made for some interesting conversations and funny shots.

At one point, two 11-year-old boys ran up to my camera, asked me if it was on to which I responded yes. They then began to make funny faces and stick out their tongues. Unfortunately, the camera was focused on the learning table happening behind the boys, so their faces were blurry and out of focus. Despite the out-of-focus shot, that moment was one of my favorites from shooting this group because it was the epitome of the community at Keystone Science School. The school was a fun, experiential environment where students learned about the natural sciences by being in nature. They were encouraged to speak out, ask questions and explore their surroundings. Overall, the experience of filming with these students and staff members was enjoyable.

Thinking more about the process of creating this video and my thoughts throughout the project, the meetings, emails, photo scouts, shoots and post-production edits, etc., I constantly questioned myself as to whether or not I was doing enough. At times, it felt as if I was making video solely for the organization and not for the
overarching idea of campaign project. In other words, I lost sight of my objectives throughout this project multiple times. I remember while editing the Keystone video, I was thinking about how the video had nothing to do with Patagonia. I remember being upset with myself for losing focus on my own project, not understanding my point and not knowing how to mitigate the issue. It was then my thesis committee suggested bringing in Patagonia garment shots as product placement as a way to integrate Patagonia. So, I created close up shots of Patagonia jackets, shorts, pants, etc.: then I spliced them into the existing video. However, despite my attempts the garment shots felt forced and unauthentic. This was the moment I had some clarity around my project. I realized the focus should not be on the garments or the Patagonia branding. The focus should be on the organization and how Keystone Science School is part of the Patagonia family by being a grant recipient. With this new clarity on my project, my committee suggested utilizing a voice over that speaks to the organization and its involvement with Patagonia. I will speak to the voice over addition later in this section.

My visits to Aspen Center for Environment Sciences were less frequent than my visits to Keystone. This was due in large part to the three plus hour drive it took to get to Aspen each time that certainly had an effect on the end result of the video since I was not able to visit as frequently. Similar to Keystone, I called and emailed members of ACES to discussed my project. ACES had two campuses: one near the town of Aspen and the other a few miles outside the town. ACES was welcoming and open to me filming on their property. In the winter of 2014, I visited the two campuses and captured landscape shots along with still photography of the areas. I visited ACES a total of three times: 1)
for personal introductory and scouting photos, 2) for landscape shots and more photos, and 3) to film the student groups. These shoots were completed over a two-to-three-month span. There was nothing difficult or outstandingly problematic with this specific shoot. However, I do wish I had visited the campus when more students and activity was taking place. The majority of my footage of ACES is slower paced, landscape, majestic-like shots, which speaks to the Aspen area relatively well, but did not provide much variety in the editing process in comparison to the Keystone video.

The footage I captured greatly influenced my editing decisions post-production. Prior to shooting the videos, I had drawn story-boards for each video (Appendix B). As previously mentioned, my third visit to the campus was when there was just one group of students. Given the one group, I did not capture the range of students I had initially planned to show. I had hoped to film more students running around the campus, interacting with the animals and faculty, etc.; because time and money did not permit me to visit as often. While filming I made the decision to focus on the landscape shots that spoke to the natural beauty of Aspen which I thought would help support ACES’s mission of sustainability. I shifted my emphasis of video from the students to the environment of ACES, and felt comfortable making this shift because the style tied into Patagonia’s visual aesthetic. Patagonia’s aesthetic is majestic landscapes and showing activity from a distance. Additionally, I felt the footage captured was more representative of ACES’s personality as methodical, a tad reclusive and wanting to maintain the pristine beauty of its environment.
The ACES video moves slower than the Keystone video because the focus was different. While filming ACES, I made the decision to focus on the landscape which I felt was in alignment with the type of shots Patagonia typically captures in their videos. Now, my personal style for filming and editing is extremely rhythmic, faster paced, and dynamic. However, I was attempting to replicate a deliberately slower style that allows the viewer to linger on the shot versus forcing the eye to keep up. Since this is not my typical style, it proved to be difficult and less exciting of a video to edit on a personal level. However, I liked that I took a chance to replicate that style and push myself outside my own thinking. In a way, I was challenging myself to think like a videographer for Patagonia and obtain these long shots of the area. Frankly, looking back at the video, it could benefit from a couple quicker cuts and color enhancement to bring to life the vibrancy and natural hues of the area. Specifically, I could have brightened the shots of the children and the animals to accentuate the natural coloring of the environment.

Similar to Keystone, I questioned myself throughout the ACES video. I questioned if I was making the right decision to focus on the landscape: was it enough to tell the story, was it enough for the project, etc. However, by the time I was editing ACES, I had a clearer understanding of what I was trying to accomplish. These videos were meant to be examples of a way Patagonia could shift its communication model and reach a broader audience. My objective was to show the strategic concept and the potential thinking in highlighting the grassroots organizations to communication Patagonia’s initiatives. So, with ACES, I tried to show the environment and the natural enjoyment of the students. I believe the video was successful in showing those two
themes. I will speak to the areas that were challenging and least successful about the ACES and Keystone videos later in this section.

Boulder B-Cycle was by far the most challenging production of the three. I had coffee with a representative of Boulder B-Cycle prior to shooting to discuss my project. Since Boulder was the closest geographically to my apartment in downtown Denver, I executed this shoot last. I shot Keystone and ACES footage on my Nikon D90 DSLR with a macro and telephoto lens. Boulder required a different approach. The thought process behind this video would be to try and replicate the action of renting a bike for a day and riding around the Boulder city center. Instead of bringing my DSLR, I brought my GoPro. I had scouted Boulder prior to shooting and knew I wanted to focus on the areas around Pearl Street Mall and circling that downtown area. My aim was to ride around the areas surrounding Pearl Street with my GoPro attached to the bike.

My initial set up of approaching the B-Cycle kiosk worked. The difficulty came once I attached the camera to the bike. As I started riding around, the bounciness of the ride altered my camera to the point where it fell off my bike in the middle of a bike lane with on-coming traffic. I was extremely nervous that a car might run over my GoPro, but fortunately that did not happen. I continued trying to troubleshoot multitasking my camera and bike riding skills for another three to four hours before returning the bike and driving back to Denver. Once the footage was uploaded on my computer, I saw how shaky and disjointed the footage truly was, but I had convinced myself that the footage was redeemable.
I should have tried to re-shoot but by that point I was overwhelmed. As established earlier in this discussion, I had been questioning my purpose and goals throughout the whole project. Additionally, I was studying full time in school and I started having anxiety issues because of this project. I left Boulder feeling defeated because I came into the shoot with a good idea that I was determined to execute. When I could not execute to the level I always aspire to, I felt down and completely overwhelmed with what I was trying to accomplish. At one point, I let my fear and anxiety of messing up again control my judgment. I made the decision to use the bouncy footage and see what I could create despite part of me knowing I should have scratched the concept.

Reflecting on how I could have salvaged the shoot or executed differently and still have the same point-of-view aesthetic, I should have thought of ways to trouble shoot where my camera was positioned. The bike ride itself was bumpy. That aspect was uncontrollable. What was controllable is my camera. Instead of sticking the camera to the bike, I should have wrapped the camera around my chest. The camera wrapped to the chest would have been preferable because the shot would have still included the handle bars, the front wheel, the front basket and the bike lanes/sidewalks, all of which communicate being on the bike. And, perhaps, my body would have added more stability to the camera, at least reducing the bouncing somewhat.

The Boulder video is the weakest of the three videos created for this project. In the attempt to salvage the bike footage, I scrubbed the footage in post-production, I liked the look of the scrub effect, similar to a photo time lapse effect. My avante-garde and rhythmic-trained style enjoyed the disjointed, jumping shots, so I edited the footage to
reflect that style. A few months had passed and by this point in the project, I had moved from Colorado to California. I had been offered an entry level marketing position with a beverage company based in LA. I had one chance to go back up to Boulder in the winter to capture more footage of the bikes near the Patagonia shops on Pearl Street. In order to continue troubleshooting the video, I asked B-Cycle if I could repurpose already-shot footage that included people riding around town. They sent me some shots and I incorporated the content into my video. The incorporation of people riding around town helped break up the visual bounciness of my original disjointed footage.

The point-of-view approach worked for the video because it helped tell the story of what was the point of B-Cycle. The initial concept to ride the bike around town and then, in turn, show people also riding around the town worked. It helped give more context to the purpose of B-Cycle. What did not work was the execution of the shoot because of the bounciness and instability of the bike ride. Also, noticeable landmarks to communicate the Boulder area are missing. I take responsibility for those missing shots. I have been told that the Boulder area is represented by the Flat Irons and the University of Colorado Boulder. My perceptions of the Boulder area were the town is a small active town, tons of organic products and shops, and a bit more liberal than Denver. I realize now, I could I have looked more into the iconography of the area to help better articulate that this is Boulder and not just any small town in America.

Additionally, an interesting comment arose from one of my thesis committee members about the lack of helmets and safety precautions in the video. The comment was new to me and made me think about the way all bike-sharing organizations promote their
services. It is undeniably dangerous to promote bike riding without helmets involved or some discussion about safety precautions when riding on the roads with cars. It is something that had not crossed my mind because most bike-sharing organizations do not discuss it and/or allow you rent a helmet. When walking up to the kiosk to rent a bike, you acknowledge that you are riding at your own risk. However, there is no opportunity to rent a helmet in addition to a bike with B-Cycle to ensure safety. That in itself is a dilemma to the communications of the potential good that bike-sharing can have on a community. If I were to do this project over again, I’d make sure to include helmets and ask B-Cycle to speak to the safety precautions one can take when renting a bike. Safety precautions are a huge part of biking and sharing the road with cars, so the inclusion of safety communications would be must.

Keystone and ACES were more successful because the footage was more organic. I was a bystander capturing real moments in Keystone and Aspen. I rarely had to alter or interfere with the day’s activities. Boulder was a somewhat staged shoot where I had to direct my own actions in the effort to convince the audience that 1) I am riding a bike around Boulder, Colorado and 2) B-Cycle is an organization that adds value to the community. The footage sent to me was staged as well where team members held a camera on the back of a car and filmed other team members riding in the middle of the street, without helmets, which is not consistent with how people use B-Cycle or the philosophy of B-Cycle.

By this point I was living in California, so I worked remotely with representatives of the organizations to obtain voiceovers. I asked them to record themselves giving a
short description of the organization, what it stands for and how Patagonia’s grant helped them accomplish their goals. I think the voiceovers work on a general level, but the answers and/or my initial directions could have been stronger. The voiceovers are missing that level of passion and excitement about the value of work these organizations are contributing to their communities. If I could do it differently, I would physically sit with the person while they were answering the questions. I needed to do something to prompt the representatives’ passion for their organization. If I was physically in their presence, I could have had a conversation and captured a genuine moment of excitement for their work.

The least successful aspects in the Keystone video were, as I mentioned, at times I lost sight of the objective of the video for the whole project. I had captured so much that at one point I got confused about what I was trying accomplish with the video. The variety of shots provided a ton of content: however, it started to lead me down a different path in editing. The suggestion of the voiceover, and the title cards, helped reel the video back into the project.

I learned from the Keystone shoot and tried to stay focused all throughout the ACES shoot. I still questioned my decisions and motives, but I made deliberate choices about why I wanted landscape shots and why I wanted to capture the students from a distance. Interestingly, my deliberate attempt to replicate the Patagonia style and communicate a sense awe for the land is the weakness of the video. I took a chance on a direction, but at times the video feels too distant from its subject. Time has allowed me to see that flaw in the video. If I were to do it again, I would make choices to be closer in
distance to the subjects and visit at times when more students are present, thus making
the students an integral part of the video. I would still try to replicate Patagonia style, but
I would do so by varying my angels when shooting (i.e. low angles, high angels, play
with a wide angel lens, etc.)

This project was challenging and risky. The concept and then lack of focus on my
part made the shoots confusing at times. However, I learned that sometimes your plans
are not executed as seamlessly as you had envisioned. I learned to be flexible and nimble
either be it with a shoot starting late due to a snowstorm or when the camera set up is just
not working and you need to troubleshoot your whole concept. The project was a true test
of me being able to look at my own strategic plan and ask if the content created is
effective and does it meet the objective. The question about effectiveness would be
determined by testing the videos on consumers, a task beyond the scope of this thesis
project: however, I do believe it meets the objective. Again, the objective of the project
was to suggest and demonstrate another communication model for Patagonia to increase
its communication of its CSR activities to a broader audience. The videos demonstrate
the endorsement model as a way Patagonia can leverage its grant recipients to speak
about how the organizations are adding value to the community and how Patagonia is
supporting.

My intended career path is to go into brand management for a consumer goods
company. The intention of these videos, and more broadly, this whole project, was to
create a strategic plan that could help me develop my skills as a communicator and
marketer. Given this reasoning, would I pitch these videos to Patagonia? Yes and no. I
would pitch the idea to Patagonia if I was interviewing for a position in their marketing team as an example of some of the diverse thinking I could bring to the department about CSR. For instance, the project itself is built off of the endorsement model. I would talk about the opportunity to shift their communication models to include an endorsement strategy featuring their partnering organizations and grant recipients who in turn could bring in more support and generate activism from a broader consumer base. I would not pitch the exact videos created for this project. Instead, I would use the videos as a sizzle reel to showcase a concept and provide an example of my strategic thinking. If I was not interviewing or hoping for the chance to interview with Patagonia, I would use this project as a learning tool and example of my strategic thinking for marketing/communications positions with other potential employers.

As mentioned in the introduction and literature review of this project, there is a consumer base for Patagonia that goes untargeted and untouched because they are not the expected outdoor-enthusiast consumer, or the traditional core consumer. These consumers arguably wear Patagonia apparel for fashion versus utility. However, it is an assumption that these consumers cannot or do not identify with the brand message of sustainability. So, looking for ways to talk to this consumer base allowed me to think a bit differently about how Patagonia currently speaks to its core as well as its untargeted consumers.

It is beyond the scope of this project to measure if I was successful in convincing the core and the untargeted consumer about Patagonia’s CSR and grassroots non-profits. However, I think the concept has the potential to be powerful for those consumers. The
concept of the project is the campaign can be tailored to its local community: be it Colorado, New York City, Atlanta, Wyoming, etc. Each community has different non-profits working to better specific aspects of their communities. The idea is to create a different communication tactic that resonates with those untargeted consumers and reinforces the core. The videos created for this project were meant to showcase the communication concept. Consumer testing and measurement would be the next step to determine the successfulness. It is my opinion, however, that the videos created for this project speak more to the core consumer than the untargeted consumer because the core is more representative in Colorado. I would argue the untargeted consumer is more city-dwelling, suburban high middle-class, in areas such as New York City, Long Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, etc. So the campaign would need to highlight non-profits in these communities.

Throughout this project I researched the brand, consumer perceptions in relation to the brand and its competitors, and with this analysis, I saw there was an opportunity to re-tell the brand story to an untargeted audience by utilizing local organizations to speak on behalf of Patagonia’s activism. Thus, I built this project to showcase my deductive reasoning and how even with a company as financially successful as Patagonia, there is still an opportunity reach more people. Despite not being driven to pitch this project directly to Patagonia, the project was an opportunity for me to flex my education in graduate school with respect to campaign development, production, branding, and communications with my chosen career path in brand management and corporate communications.
Critical Reflection of Project: CSR and Recommendation

The process that went into this project from the literature review, to shooting, to editing and then to writing this section of the report has been an interesting experience. I am thankful to the organizations that took the time to sit with me, allow me to discuss my project, and ask them questions about their work. The people working in these non-profits share a common thread: they wanted to be part of something greater than themselves. They all sought work that adds value towards bettering their communities. Not everyone working in these non-profits was from Colorado. I met a woman at Keystone Science School who, through talking, I realized had attended the same private school in Atlanta as I had. She was in 8th grade and I was in 7th grade at The Paideia School at the same time. We connected and she explained to me why she had moved to Colorado and why she chose to work in the non-profit sector. Her decision was influenced by her love of the outdoors, not fully knowing what she wanted to do after college but understanding her passion for community development and sustainability. In other words, she knew she wanted to do something in relation to shaping a community in better environmental choices but also wanting to make money. Her choice was thought-provoking and lends itself to the discussion of the personal tension of wanting to do good work for a community but also needing to make money. In other words, she was experiencing the predicament of for-profit versus non-profit within community development.

There is tension in CSR initiatives and the inherent objective of a corporation that may add an extra level of skepticism about authenticity of those initiatives in the eyes of
consumers. To elaborate, early research argued that a company’s sole responsibility was to maximize profits. Archie Carroll discusses the evolution of CSR in his article arguing how CSR grew from social pressure. He writes,

In 1971 the Committee for Economic Development used a “three concentric circles” approach to depicting CSR. The inner circle included basic economic functions—growth, products, jobs. The intermediate circle suggested that economic functions must be exercised with a sensitive awareness of changing social values and priorities. The outer circle outlined newly emerging and still amorphous responsibilities that business should assume to become more actively involved in improving the social environment.

Companies have a responsibility to their stakeholders, employees and investors, but these companies also have a responsibility to the environments in which they operate. Carroll outlines how this understanding of CSR leads to his concept of the CSR pyramid. He suggests there are four kinds of CSR that make up total CSR: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. A company’s economic responsibilities are at the bottom of the pyramid because it is the building block for which a corporation exists; a corporation’s sole goal is, arguably, to be profitable. Above economic responsibilities in the pyramid is legal responsibilities; a company is required and expected to obey the laws of the land in


which it operates. Next is ethical responsibilities where companies are expected to behave ethically; do what is morally right and avoid creating harm. At the top of the pyramid is philanthropic responsibilities. Here at the top is where companies are expected to be good corporate citizens, contribute resources to the community and assist in improving the quality of life amongst the public.

The question that arises from this CSR pyramid is how important and necessary are the four CSR categories to a company? In a theoretical sense, the philanthropic responsibilities would be of equal emphasis to ethical or legal responsibilities. However, in reality, philanthropy is desired but not a necessity in terms of gaining stakeholder loyalty. Carroll argues that consumers like when companies contribute to communities, but consumers do not view companies as “bad” or “unethical” if the company does not contribute. To simplify, this section of the pyramid is regarded as more voluntary than a requirement although the expectation of philanthropic initiatives is present. The overall take away from this argument is the important underlying drivers of CSR are economics, legality and ethics, while philanthropic is the cherry on top. Thus, there is the argument that corporations do not have much of an incentive to conduct CSR that is truly for the public good.

Earlier I mentioned there is tension in CSR initiatives and the inherent objective of a corporation that may add an extra level of skepticism about authenticity in the eyes

of consumers. In other words, consumers might be skeptical of a company’s CSR campaign if it seems too opportunistic about current social issues. Research shows that CSR campaigns have a positive impact on brand image and product perception.\textsuperscript{110} However, consumers are savvier than in previous times and can detect if a CSR initiative is purely for publicity or genuinely about the public welfare.\textsuperscript{111} In a Nielsen study, consumers and senior executives were asked if they thought CSR efforts are driven by the desire to do what is right for society (responsibility) or is it driven by the want for publicity. According to the results, 61% of senior corporate leaders believed that CSR efforts are driven by responsibility. On the other hand, 41% consumers believed CSR is driven by responsibility and 43% of consumers believed CSR is driven by publicity.\textsuperscript{112}

Given this level of skepticism amongst consumers, and potentially other stakeholders like current and future employees, investors, partners, etc. (Sen, Bhattacharya and Korschun, 2006),\textsuperscript{113} it is important for a company to be genuine,

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authentic, and transparent about its CSR. In the Nielsen study, half of the consumer respondents felt that the way companies communicate their CSR initiatives is too self-serving.¹¹⁴

In the literature review and discussion about Patagonia, it is mentioned that Patagonia communicates their CSR initiatives across multiple channels: social, digital, print materials, video, etc. I do not think Patagonia’s communications about their activities or sustainability initiatives are self-serving because the brand grew from an environmental mission. “Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to environmental crisis.”¹¹⁵ As mentioned in the literature review, Patagonia published an ad on Black Friday in November 2011 saying “Don’t Buy This Jacket.” The ad was extremely impactful, spoke on the issue of overconsumption especially on a big retail holiday, and sparked conversations. The ad also increased Patagonia’s profits by 30% because what the company told consumers not to do, “Don’t buy this jacket,” consumers liked the ad and purchased more Patagonia gear as a result. In other words, the advert resulted in the opposite of what it was communicating. The ad was successful in sparking conversation but in a way contributed to the issue it was discussing.


To any other major corporation, posting an ad on one of the largest retail holidays in the United States, saying “Don’t Buy This Jacket” and resulting in a 30% increase in profits—no one could have predicted those results. Given the nature of the advert and what the advert was communicating, it did not seem like Patagonia was expecting those results. It is an interesting situation because Patagonia is not operating like a traditional company whose objective is to maximize profits. From my research into the company and its communications, financial gain is not the driving force behind business decisions: yet, it is exactly what happened with such a bold public ad. Thus, this suggests that even philanthropic CSR initiatives are profitable; in other words, CSR with the intention to serve the public good can be profitable.

Patagonia learned from that experience and on Black Friday in 2016, the brand said 100% of its Black Friday sales would be donated to grassroots environmental organizations. In a press statement from the company after that Black Friday,

We’re humbled to report the response was beyond expectations: with your help, Patagonia reached a record-breaking $10 million in sales. We expected to reach $2 million in sales—we beat that expectation five times over. The enormous love our customers showed to the planet on Black Friday enables us to give every penny to hundreds of grassroots environmental organizations working around the world. Many of these environmental groups are underfunded and under the radar, and they are overwhelmed with your commitment. On behalf of these activists and every Patagonia employee, we extend a heartfelt thank you to our customers, friends and community worldwide who showed up to #loveourplanet.

By being reflective and critical of their Black Friday communications and results, Patagonia learned that it is much more difficult to change consumer behavior. Alternatively, Patagonia decided to take action and say we cannot change consumer behavior overnight but we can change what we do with profits.

Referring back to Carroll’s CSR pyramid, Patagonia, in a sense, flips the pyramid structure. In Carroll’s argument, the building block of the pyramid is economic responsibility, legal, ethical, and then philanthropic responsibilities. I would argue Patagonia’s building blocks start with the philanthropic level making the company a unique study in comparison to a traditional corporation. Additionally, I think this is specifically unique to Patagonia due in large part to how the company initially developed. This practice of philanthropy first is authentic to the brand.

To elaborate, in my opinion a company like Clorox, Johnson & Johnson, or Unilever could not 1) publish an ad telling people not to buy their product, 2) donate 100% of profits to a cause, and/or 3) create a CSR campaign strictly for the public good for the following reason: it would not be authentic to their brands, overall brand personalities or going against their company objectives of maximize profits and increasing market share.

Yvon Chouinard has said that he would be more than happy to share his production techniques when it comes to making recyclable garments with companies like Nike if they wanted the information. This is to say Patagonia is transparent with its innovation, honest with its values and communications, and consistent in its activities. I would argue that not many would think Patagonia is being opportunistic when it posts a
photo on Instagram about its stance on a hazardous pipeline. Their communications are consistent across the board that at the end of the day adds up to the authenticity of the brand.

We have established that being a good corporate citizen is at the forefront of Patagonia’s values; the people of the company value sustainability, activism, and leading the discussions about environmentalism. Where companies could learn from Patagonia is not necessarily in re-creating anti-consumption ads or donating 100% of its sales to grassroots programs. Instead companies can learn that putting social good values in the forefront of its CSR initiatives can be beneficial and can have a positive impact on sales. Patagonia is learning what works for the brand by being reflective of their efforts so there is always innovation and forward momentum. Therefore, the biggest take away I see coming from all their efforts for other companies to emulate, both public and private, are threefold: 1) transparency, 2) honesty, and 3) consistency.

Throughout this project, I have followed all of Patagonia’s digital communication channels as well as received their print catalogs. It is a unique company in mission and operations. Much of my perspective about the brand is shaped from my research for this project. However, my perspective about CSR in application is shaped from my life around companies, being an engaged consumer and my current professional work. This is why my discoveries, and subsequently, my recommendations for other companies are not to merely be like Patagonia. Instead I would recommend companies think about the larger themes of Patagonia’s work in being transparent about their operations, honest about their intentions and consistent in their messaging.
Going back to my opinion that a Clorox, Johnson & Johnson, or Unilever could not replicate Patagonia’s exact communication tactics I stand by that opinion. However, the three corporate giants could implement CSR around the three themes of transparency, honesty and consistency. This is not to suggest these corporations need to revamp anything regarding their current CSR initiatives. My thought is if a company was looking for inspiration or actionable objectives, these themes are a good starting point in developing a larger strategic CSR plan.

I briefly touched on the dilemma of CSR servicing the public good versus maximizing profits. Patagonia experienced this conflict with its Black Friday advert in 2011, and in turn, learned from that experience and made adjustments to its activities on Black Friday in 2016 (donating 100% of its sales to grassroots organizations). The question I have been hinting at throughout this report is, can any CSR truly service the public good? Patagonia is an example of a yes to that question because I do not know of any other company, private or public, that would donate 100% of its profits for one day to non-profit organizations. I believe Patagonia is an example of a company putting the public good above profits. However, the question then is, does it matter? Does it matter if a CSR initiative does not truly service the public good? This question is somewhat similar to the philosophical idea that there is no such thing as a self-less act. So far in my career I’ve learned that every idea or new approach needs to answer the following: what does it do for the business? How does my idea add value to the brand? If the idea does not add value or benefit the brand, you do not pursue the idea. So, my question now is, what is the value of CSR purely serving the public to a company?
I struggle with this thought because the idealistic side of me says the value is in the cultural clout, industry leadership and having a positive impact on communities. Yet, what does any of that translate to in the long run? Is the company more profitable? Do employees get paid more for positively impacting a community? This project has opened my mind to the possibilities of CSR for the public good and the multiple questions that then arise as a result in how it benefits a company. This tension in my mind to answer these questions is the difficulty between non-profit and for-profit organizations. The non-profit is for the public good. A for-profit organization is for its stakeholders, revenues, market share, and profits, etc. Patagonia is somewhat operating like a non-profit where their purpose is to service the public good and its consumers above making profits. To clarify, the goal is not to not make profits, but to “build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to environmental crisis.” Arguably, if a company does not engage in some sort of social responsibility in this day and age, the company could run the risk of receiving negative feedback and backlash to its products and/or services. However, I think this is dependent on the size, reach, and impact of the company on society. For instance, I would say a large publically traded or private company should have some sort of interest in the public good given the stakeholders and consumers. In other words, a larger company faces some different challenges in terms of brand growth and staying relevant to its publics. A smaller start-up

or super niche company would have a different brand growth strategy, and maybe a CSR plan does not fit into its strategy at the time. Overall, the importance and impact of CSR for a company is dependent on the goal and mission of the business.

Patagonia’s business mission is to use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis and this is the key to Patagonia’s CSR. I would not say Patagonia’s CSR efforts are undercover or hidden from the public by any means. All of their external-facing communications speak to the company mission and articulate their positions on climate issues. I have been following Patagonia’s communications in digital and print communications. If anything, I would argue the company is one of the more open companies about their political stances on climate change and sustainability. This openness and willingness to be critical of climate policy, similar to their critique of modern consumerism as evident in the Black Friday 2011 advert, reinforces the brand’s authenticity in its mission and practice. Again, Patagonia’s authenticity lies in the brand’s transparency in practice and innovation, honesty in its objectives and consistency in its messaging and efforts to amplify its company mission.

Additionally, Patagonia’s authenticity is accentuated in its economic model. I mentioned earlier that the company operates similarly to a non-profit where the focus and drive is not on the profits. Patagonia’s business objective is use business to inspire solutions for the environmental crisis. Therefore, the company needs to generate a profit in order to continue its mission but maximizing profits is not at the forefront of its business activities. Here is where the idea of sustainable profits comes to mind. My previous examples with Johnson & Johnson or Clorox are examples of companies with
the goal of maximizing profits. In other words, “all corporate activities are oriented towards maximizing profitability.”\textsuperscript{118} Sustainable profits is a “value-oriented concept that assess the use of environmental and social resources analogously to the way economic capital is accounted for…it does not subordinate environmental and social issues to financial goals.”\textsuperscript{119} Essentially this concept says environmental capital, economic capital and social capital are treated as equals in terms of importance and business practices. In thinking about Patagonia, it could be argued that Patagonia’s business works to generate sustainable profits versus maximizing profits.

An example of Patagonia’s sustainable profit model and consistency in reflecting on its business activities, Patagonia also reflects on their physical impact on the environment in terms of manufacturing. The company also reflects on its impact on the social conversation around sustainability as they make changes to their production practices. By reflective, I mean the company actively reevaluates their manufacturing practices and the ways it communicates its manufacturing practices to its public. This type of reflective thinking about their physical activities allow the company to think more critically about its role and responsibility to society. And, this practice reinforces the

\textsuperscript{118} Figge, Frank, Dr., and Tobias Hahn, Dr. "Sustainable Profit: Reconciling Sustainability and Corporate Profitablity." \textit{Sustainable Value} (n.d.): 1. \textit{Sustainable Value}. Web.

\textsuperscript{119} Figge, Frank, Dr., and Tobias Hahn, Dr. "Sustainable Profit: Reconciling Sustainability and Corporate Profitablity." \textit{Sustainable Value} (n.d.): 1. \textit{Sustainable Value}. Web.
perception of the brand’s transparency, honesty and consistency in regards to openness to change and progress that further accentuates Patagonia’s authenticity.

The videos created for this project were an example of a way to further Patagonia’s communication and showcase the work of local non-profits on Patagonia’s digital channels as a way to educate more consumers about the brand mission. The videos provide the public a showcase of local community work and service the Patagonia brand by further communicating the company’s dedication to environmentalism and sustainability. In the development stage of this project, I made a decision to utilize the endorsement model where Patagonia was not the focus of the initiative but instead was a supporter.

It is beyond the scope to of this project to prove the effects of the videos: however, I believe the videos function on one plane of the CSR continuum. The planes would be either 1) maximizing profits, influencing consumers, communicating the brand message or 2) purely servicing the public, showcasing local community leaders and the work being done to benefit the community. This project’s objective was to suggest a new way of communicating the brand’s activities to a larger consumer base and influence consumers. I believe it is possible for works similar to these created for this project to exist both for the public good and in service to the brand. The videos created for this project only had servicing the brand in mind, but since I cannot measure effectiveness or consumers’ responses to the videos, within the scope of this project, the videos are stronger in the arena of public good.
These videos provide basic exposure for the non-profits about their work, ideas and perspectives to a larger audience: the Patagonia audience. As mentioned, the intention was to service the brand and communicate the brand message. However, the videos work harder for the non-profits. This is potentially a result of the endorsement model in that the non-profits take center stage over the Patagonia, therefore allowing the videos to service the public good over the brand itself.

It would be a lie to suggest that I intentionally created these videos and strategic plan for the public good. Again, my goal for the project was to have an example of my strategic thinking and ways to improve communications for an already successful company. In other words, I was focused on servicing the brand and what the campaign would mean for the brand. Nevertheless, I find this interesting to think about. I would challenge Patagonia, other companies, students and myself to actively think of ways our communications and CSR activities can service both the public and the brands. Thinking back to my videos and the ways I could have met the challenge, I do not know the answer.

My recommendation for students researching CSR would be to think about ways in which CSR can service both the public and the brand. Think about what it means to service and benefit the public versus solely communicating for the brand. In my head, servicing the public is similar to selfless-ness, recognizing the goal is not to benefit the corporate economic bottom line but to think about the social responsibility to others despite the activity potentially not being effective or beneficial for the company. In complete honesty, the design and pursuit of this project was for my benefit, so I cannot
say I place these videos on that CSR continuum. It is possible, but this project does not accomplish it. It would be fascinating, however, to recreate this project potentially with a different brand and think through what that communication would look like if it would service the public and the brand.

Conclusion

The videos made for this project suggest a tactic that has the potential to service the public and service the brand. This project was lofty mainly because it seemed that Patagonia did not need any advice on its communications. In the spirit of being reflective and critical of even their successful communications, the project presents another tactic in how to communicate the Patagonia’s other CSR activities with the Grassroots Grant. In other words, despite the challenges throughout this project, I think this project can offer Patagonia, other companies, and students a new perspective in how to tactically amplify current and future CSR initiatives. By using the endorsement model, this project gave the non-profits the platform and basic exposure.

As mentioned earlier, Patagonia is continuously reflective of their activities. This is evidenced by the way the brand reevaluated its Black Friday advert in 2011 impact. They recognized that it is difficult to immediately, or if at all, alter consumer behavior. Thus in 2016, the brand promised to donate 100% of its Black Friday sales to grassroots organizations. This reflective practice towards their communication strategies and activities reinforces the key themes deducted from my research for this project: 1) transparency, 2) honesty, and 3) consistency. I discussed how a company merely replicating Patagonia’s efforts and tactics would not be authentic. The main take away of
this project for other brands is, other brands can learn from these themes and develop both public and private CSR efforts.

Given I cannot measure effectiveness of the videos on the intended audience, the core and the untargeted Patagonia consumer, the videos alone act as exposure amplifiers for the non-profits filmed. The question now remains. Was I successful? The overall objective of this project was to showcase local non-profit Patagonia grant recipients, the local work being done and how Patagonia is the good corporate leader for giving smaller organization this platform. The project had its challenges, as previously discussed, but overall, I believe I was successful in showing the concept and I created videos that emphasized the non-profits.

This project was an opportunity to learn and develop my skills in communications and brand strategy. Although the videos were not designed with the public good in mind, there is an opportunity for future projects to incorporate ways to create communications that service both the public and the brand. A potential way to take this project further is to test the videos with consumers and evaluate if the project concept could service the public and the brand.

Finally, I believe my videos for this project showcased my desired concept and strategic reasoning, allowing me to speak to this project in future interviews with potential employers. I improved my communication skills, strategic reasoning skills by taking editing risks and learning to be more flexible with my planning. I learned that sometimes things do not go according to plan, however, when that happens I should troubleshoot and move on. Overall, this project helped me develop and give me the
experience to pursue my career path in brand management and corporate communications.

Lastly, my recommendation to Patagonia is to think about how else they can further their efforts to uplift their local non-profit grant recipients and provide exposure for the organizations in the effort to engage with a larger audience and amplify their overall message of environmental activism. Their current practice of being transparent, honest and consistent of their communications and activities are important traits in which other companies can learn and imitate. I’ve certainly learned quite a bit and have been inspired by Patagonia’s work throughout this project. I think the next step for them to continue being successful and amplifying their message is to uplift their grant recipients and the local work these organizations do for their local communities, and in turn national and global communities.
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Appendix A: ACES
Appendix B: Keystone Science School
Appendix C: Boulder B-Cycle