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Section 1 Introduction

Organizational History and Profile:

Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia Inc., began his love for the outdoors at the age of 14 years old and soon found himself emerging in the art of rock climbing. Fast forward a few years later he, along with friend Tom Frost, founded their first business venture together in 1965 called Chouinard Equipment with the goal of improving rock climbing for other outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy the activity with lighter, stronger, and easier to use equipment. After focusing their earlier years to make rock climbing equipment more functional and eco-friendlier, they became the largest supplier of climbing hardware in the United States in 1970. Soon after they began making outdoor apparel including shirts, raincoats, and other accessories specifically for climbing activities to make the experience easier for new and experienced climbers. They continued making changes in their equipment and apparel to make the overall rock-climbing experience easier and opened their first official store, Great Pacific Iron Works, in 1973 in Ventura, California which serves as the Patagonia headquarters today. By 1975 Yvon and Frost parted ways with the former becoming the sole owner of the company and renaming it Patagonia after a trip to the region of the same name in South America.

Patagonia continues to expand its product line into outerwear, backpacks, camping accessories, food items, and other outdoor essentials but are known for other efforts and recognitions as well. With Yvon being big in helping preserve the natural tendencies of the environment, he expanded Patagonia's sustainability and environmental protections efforts by pledging 10% of the company's profits to environmental conservation groups in 1985 along with committing 1% of sales to conservation organizations as well. With continued focus on

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sustainability and activism efforts and they were rewarded in 2012 with becoming a Benefit

Corporation, a certification given to companies that meet the highest standards of social and environmental performance. As of 2022, the ownership of the company was transferred into two trusts, The Patagonia Purpose Trust and Holdfast Collective, which ensures Yvon's mission to continue to use Patagonia's profits help fight climate change and other important environmental initiatives are maintained. Currently, Patagonia's revenue continues to increase bringing in over \$100 million in revenue a year with them selling more than \$1 billion a year of their products and being worth over \$3 billion as a company today.

Research Goals, Objectives, & Methodologies:

The hypothesis formed was that Patagonia's decentralized operational structure enhances their ability to engage and interact with their online community, resulting in stronger brand loyalty and maintaining their unique market position in the retail industry compared to their competitors with more centralized operations. For the purpose of this research and proving this hypothesis to be true, there were three main goals to achieve. The first goal is to find a better understanding of Patagonia's operational and organizational structures through performing qualitative interviews and reviewing illustrative case studies. The second goal is to find a better understanding of how their social media strategies create a diverse and loyal online brand community through social media listening. The third goal is to find examples of their competitors' specific characteristics that can be compared to Patagonia to show what elements might work best in their niche position in the retail industry through illustrative case studies. In order to achieve these goals, the primary research consisted of conducted in-person and email interviews with the key decision makers at the Buckhead Patagonia location including their store

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manager, social media/marketing leader, and customer service/product repairs specialist. These interviews helped gain understanding of their role's responsibilities and gave more insight into the expectations and requirements that corporate Patagonia sets and how they are interpreted and implemented at this specific location. To aid this primary research action, there was a communication audit of their internal corporate newsletter. This highlighted the organization's management style and provided key characteristics that differentiate them from their competition and also provided definitions to the elements that make Patagonia run a successful decentralized organization. It also highlighted specific elements that differed and related to corporate Patagonia's social media efforts in comparison to Buckhead Patagonia's social media efforts including the ensured examination of their social media strategy being reflected in the content. Lastly, a literature review was performed on the articles and other elements that related to Patagonia's overall brand image and actions. This highlighted the main components that allow Patagonia to maintain their unique market position in the retail industry compared to their competitors.

Organizational Characteristics

Since its inception, Patagonia's organization has displayed a combination of bureaucratic, relational, and traditional elements that define its structure. Patagonia has uniquely implemented these three elements: the company has generated a massive brand following, has made immense capital gains, and has created a working culture that most businesses globally strive to achieve. Operating as a hybrid organization can be a tall task to accomplish successfully, but when done correctly all involved will reap the benefits.

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Patagonia's decentralized or participatory decision-making operational structure gives the company a distinctive blueprint that many competitors should emulate. An organization employing lower-level employees who are left to their own devices and handle day-to-day operations is no small feat, but when this element is correctly executed, the benefits vastly outweigh the issues presented to attain the said goal gradually. Deciding to delegate responsibilities throughout the company can be a risk, but it builds trust, elevates morale, and meets objectives, providing a sense of collaboration. Local stores within Patagonia's organization can interpret and implement guidelines given by corporate in any way they see fit as long as key actions are met. Patagonia provides local autonomy for its flagship stores, creating a trickle-down effect for individual operations to follow while adapting to corporate guidelines for customers' needs and regional environments. Customer demographics, climate, and other regional factors showcase the relational element flexibility of the organization, fostering responsiveness and innovation. Patagonia prioritizes building relationships within teams and their customers by cultivating a culture of open communication and shared goals. Its intent is to embody a commitment to social and environmental responsibility, positively impacting the immediate community and the broader concerns of the global society.

By incorporating bureaucratic elements into the company's structure, Patagonia showcases its reliance on corporate guidelines and key initiatives that provide a framework for all stores to follow. The founder of Patagonia Inc., Yvon Chouinard, educated all his employees on the company's philosophy, empowering the team to make sound decisions. The guidelines promote efficiency and a common direction, preventing chaos caused by poor communication. Lines of authority are transparent, creating a hierarchical system where pertinent information is

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passed down from corporate to supervisors and then to employees/staff. The chain of command can be cumbersome and tedious. However, Yvon's clear communication helped establish a practical balance for the company. Yvon's philosophy, when distilled to its essence, emphasizes proactive communication instead of reactive communication. Patagonia effectively established and maintained specific performance standards and procedures by adopting bureaucratic strategies within the organization. This structured approach ensures that all actions employees take are in harmony with the company's overarching goals and mission. By clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations, these strategies facilitate a coordinated effort toward achieving the company's objectives, ultimately fostering a culture of accountability and efficiency. This alignment not only supports Patagonia's commitment to sustainability and ethical practices but also enhances overall organizational performance. Establishing a culture of accountability within the company is essential for driving performance and aligning store operations with the organization's overarching goals. By emphasizing accountability, each store can be systematically evaluated based on how well they adhere to these collective objectives. This approach fosters a sense of responsibility among employees, encouraging them to take ownership of their actions and decisions. As a result, it not only strengthens individual performance but also contributes to the company's overall success, ensuring that all team members are working towards the same shared vision.

Patagonia seeks to hire employees who embody the brand's core values and messaging and embrace its unique lifestyle. To achieve this, the company looks for individuals who possess specialized expertise relevant to their roles, whether in retail, environmental advocacy, or product development. Additionally, a genuine passion for outdoor activities and a strong

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connection to nature are fundamental attributes that Patagonia prioritizes in potential candidates.

This commitment ensures that employees can authentically represent the brand and contribute to its mission of promoting sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Patagonia's successful approach stems from an effective combination of relational flexibility, bureaucratic oversight, and time-tested traditional strategies. This blend not only enhances the company's operational effectiveness but also positions Patagonia as a benchmark for many organizations striving for excellence. The organization's dynamic structure allows it to respond swiftly to changes in the market and adapt to the evolving needs of its stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the environment. This adaptability is further supported by a thoughtful framework of bureaucratic oversight, ensuring that while teams can be flexible in their methods, they are also aligned with the company's core values and mission. As a result, Patagonia creates a uniquely viable environment that encourages collaboration, innovation, and sustainability. This supportive atmosphere empowers all participants, from management to front-line employees, fostering a sense of purpose and commitment to the company's goals.

Section II: Excellence Traits

In the book *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's best run companies* by Thomas J Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr. we learn about the many traits that make businesses successful by looking at studies done through a range of companies. This book goes over different management strategies, models, and leadership styles. Though the book was released in the 80s we can still apply its lessons to companies thriving today like Patagonia. As stated earlier in the introduction Patagonia is a successful brand that's been around for years. Based on their longevity alone it's apparent that the company is following a few of the eight excellence traits

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whether consciously or not. After conducting research on both the Patagonia brand and the Atlanta Patagonia social media, the three prominent traits identified in this company appear to be “close to the customer”, “hands on, value driven”, and “sticking to the knit”.

In Chapter 6, entitled “Close to the customer” discusses the importance of companies creating and maintaining personal relationships with the customers. Companies that partake in this quality tend to differentiate themselves by providing exceptional customer service and staying connected with consumers throughout and often times after their service or retail experience. According to the book, companies that tend to focus on the customer make sure to prioritize responsiveness and go the extra mile to make customers feel valued not only in the customer service department but every department like operations. One key point in this chapter is about tailoring your experience to the customers, also known as “nichemanship”. In the book this is described as “a way of finding a particular niche where you are better at something than anybody else” (p.174), this approach focuses on the customer by keeping their behaviors, needs, and concerns at top of mind and providing customers with a unique product or service to meet those needs. This ensures customer loyalty and long-term satisfaction.

Another key point in this chapter is listening to users. It’s important for companies to not only create products and services that tend to customers but it’s also important to seek feedback, listen, and apply this information to future use. There’s no better way to put the customer first in your business than to ensure that you’re listening to what they’re saying and not shy away from making changes you hadn’t considered before. Better said in the book, “the best companies are pushed around by their customers, and they love it” (p.185). In summary, being close to the

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customer means the business is better in service, quality, reliability, finding a niche, and listening

(p.186)

When it comes to businesses today, the bare minimum to keep a relationship with customers would be creating a social media presence. Through channels like Instagram, Facebook, twitter (X), etc. you're able to not only share announcements and important information with your audience but you're also able to interact with them from wherever whenever. The way in which Patagonia operates their social media is a great example of putting the customer first. Businesses with multiple locations usually have a central account that's intended to represent all locations, but Patagonia allows their different stores to have their own accounts. The store we're focusing on in this paper, the Buckhead location, has an Instagram account entitled "patagoniaatl" where they announce events, initiatives, and other important information that's only happening at that store. This resembles "nichemanship" mentioned in the book; by letting each store location run their own account they can cater to each areas needs and concerns to encourage customers to feel a personal relationship with the brand. Having separate accounts for different stores also increases the chance for customers to be heard in places like the comment section or through direct messaging. Rather than hundreds of people commenting on a central account about questions or experiences they had at one of the many stores throughout the country, their comments and concerns go directly to the store's Buckhead location where they can take the feedback and apply it to future events, initiatives, and possibly share feedback to corporate to make improvements for products sold at all the stores.

In Chapter 9 we go over being "Hands-on, Value Driven". This entails strong leadership to maintain a healthy organizational structure that's based on active engagement and shared

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values. This means that the top companies have leaders that are active in the company rather than solely taking care of executive tasks and ensuring that the company is sticking to its core values. The first key point in this chapter is in regard to a company's values, "We wonder whether it is possible to be an excellent company without clarity on views and without having the right sorts of values" (p. 259). Generally, when people are attracted to a company or a brand they're not only attracted to the service or product being sold to them, but they're also invested in the companies' beliefs. There have been many instances when it's discovered that a popular company supports a cause that's not well received by its public, a good example being Starbucks supporting Israel in its ongoing issues with Gaza. When the public finds out about these relationships, they either show more support because they agree with the company or they decide to no longer support the company, or in Starbucks case, disgruntled customers take to social media to share their opinions and start a nationwide boycott to attempt to send the company a message. As stated in the book, good companies have core values and beliefs, stick to them and make it obvious for the public to know.

The second half of this excellence trait is focused on the company's leadership. The book explains that "leaders implement their visions and behave persistently simply by being highly visible", it's also explained that the best leaders are experts in their fields, usually having a background in whatever the company is focused on (p.266). As explained in the introduction and history section, that is clearly the case for Patagonia. The founder Yvon Chouinard has had a love for the outdoors practically all his life which gave him the knowledge to start his company (with Tom Frost) out with creating equipment to make the rock-climbing experience easier. Of course, today the brand has expanded to much more than rock climbing equipment alone, it's focused on

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the outdoor experience as a whole. Patagonia's leadership excels in this trait with its founder's sincere dedication to the outdoors, because he has a genuine passion for it the brand was able to grow and stick to its beliefs. The current CEO of Patagonia is Ryan Gellert. Prior to taking on this role he was president of a different rock-climbing company Black Diamond Equipment. This shows that the company stays true to their commitment to the outdoors by bringing in leadership that has a history with the issues the company and is focused on rather than any successful businessman or woman. According to their website, Patagonia's core values center around quality ("building the best product and providing the best service"), integrity ("learn from our mistakes and meet our commitments"), environmentalism ("protect our home and planet"), justice ("Be just, equitable and antiracist as a company and in our community"), and not being bound by convention ("developing new ways to do things"). By making these values easily accessible, the company is following this excellence trait. This is also evident in what Atlanta Patagonia Instagram chooses to post and events they choose to throw for the Atlanta community.

Lastly, in Chapter 10 entitled Sticking to the Knit, we go over the importance of a business staying true to themselves and avoiding the pitfall that is over-diversification. It's discussed that rather than trying to stretch the company thin by creating a service or product for every possible need to the point where it doesn't make sense is unnecessary. Successful companies identify what they specialize in and make adjustments to that central thing to be the best at it. Sticking to this trait rewards businesses with longevity and expertise in their field. Put simply businesses should value it's quality over quantity. One key point in this chapter is focused on acquisitions, if a business is looking into buying another company, it should first consider if it will further the company's image with align with its core values rather than trying to venture into

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a brand-new field, as stated in the book “un-channeled diversification is a losing proposition” (p. 271), it’s extremely important to be strategic in these situations and make sure businesses stick to their central skill.

However, this doesn’t mean that businesses should avoid diversifying at all, in fact change is just as important to stick with your values. The sweet spot of this trait is mixing the two together, “businesses that pursue some diversification – a basis for stability through adaption – yet stick close to their knitting, tend to be the superior performers” (p.272). Too little change and your audience will move on to the next shiny object but too much change and not only will the people get lost but so will the message of your company. There are many examples of this in the book like Texas Instruments who instead of venturing into unrelated industries decided to stick to what they know regarding semiconductors and other electronics. This has led them to the success they have today.

Patagonia is no different when it comes to sticking to the knit of their company. As stated earlier, Patagonia stick to their values and their original purpose of creating products that are used in outdoor activities. Instead of sticking with their original business of specializing in rock climbing equipment they continued to diversify in clothes, backpacks, and other accessories as time progressed. The company made changes but none drastic enough to stray away from its dedication to the outdoors. As far as acquisitions go, Patagonia has a food company “Patagonia Provisions” which sells organic snacks and in March of 2023 they acquired a snack brand “Moonshot” which sold “climate friendly crackers” (Marston, 2023). This is a prime example of the excellence trait, Patagonia, venturing into food makes sense because they’re providing portable meals adventurers can pack when going on a hike or any another outdoor activity. These

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snacks range from canned fish to pasta and as of recent, crackers. These kinds of changes and acquisitions are what has made Patagonia such a successful and dependable brand over the years.

In conclusion, Patagonia seems to be a sturdy and thriving brand and when researching the company and comparing its strategy with the eight excellence traits it's clear that the company isn't going anywhere any time soon as long as it sticks to being close to the customer, sticking to the knit, as well as being hands on and value driven.

Section III: Literature Review & The Research Process

The Modern Consumer

Consumerism has changed throughout the years and has led consumers down a path of trusting the digital marketing atmosphere. Beforehand, companies put more efforts into traditional marketing tactics but now we see brands transitioning to digital marketing tactics and focusing their advertising efforts on social media. The reasoning behind this stems from the modern consumer now no longer trusting regular brands, but instead trusting in influencers and social media. There's a level of trust that comes with a long-standing brand like Patagonia that advances their reputation and makes it more credible for consumers. In this modern era, people value brands that they can trust with a solid identity and Patagonia is one that has had a pretty steady message from when it was first founded. The modern consumer that engages on social media typically looks for vividness, interactivity, entertainment, as well as a reliable product. (Safwa, Abeysekara 2016). Currently, modern consumerism lies in a space where consumers want to trust brands and build relationships with them via online brand communities. In this internet or parasocial era, people dominate the stance of valuing brands that are sustainable and show that they are actively listening to their consumers concerns and requests. (Carrol, Cadet,

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Kachersky 2022). Overall, this aspect separates Patagonia from the average brand because they do have a relationship with their consumers and stand firmly on a foundational mission for pro-environmental efforts. For example, Patagonia 's Instagram page their bio isn't something that's just about buying something from the brand, it simply notes, "we're in business to save our home planet", and this powerful message sets Patagonia apart as they actively promote their mission through their brand entirely.

Community Engagement

Usually, digital marketing community engagement applies to a brand through replying to comments or other material from consumers on their social media pages. Patagonia does this to a certain extent. Their community engagement truly does lie with it and how active they are within the community when it comes to the environment and their engagement lies mostly within this realm. Their consumers, which primarily consists of eco-friendly individuals, support them because they heavily promote them taking initiative in their efforts towards environmental protections such as their heavy emphasis on donations going towards related activism efforts like climate change, social responsibility, and the environment. A huge part of Patagonia's marketing efforts is related to what they do for the environment and how the corporate structure was created to benefit the planet. With much of the world knowing that the retail industry can cause detrimental harm to the environment, Patagonia delivers a refreshed image to the retail industry by going against the rest of the retail industry by producing reliable and sustainable products that are made with the intent of not harming the environment during its creation. (Singh, Park, Martinez 2022). Patagonia is also a big proponent on emotional branding and engagement. The self-congruity theory states that a consumer would be more likely to engage with a brand that

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reflects their own self-image or aspirational identity. (Sirgy, 1982). When analyzing their Instagram page, you can see their self-image reflecting something that most consumers align with. In a case study, it was found that Patagonia's approach to environmental sustainability taps into the values of most consumers who are eco-conscious. The case study specifically quotes their "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign which did invoke a deep emotional feeling amongst their eco-conscious consumers which also helped play a key role in building their long-term customer engagement. (Ali 2024).

Marketing Strategy

Patagonia's marketing strategy focuses on their emotional appeal to their consumers and other retail enthusiasts. They sell themselves as a brand that cares about the environment and the planet, and they share a multitude of ways of how their consumers can engage with them in their efforts to show this care. Patagonia has a sustainable business model which creates a dynamic between their social media presence and how the rest of the retail industry perceives them. Patagonia actually utilizes a triple bottom line strategy within its marketing by analyzing how their social awareness and ethics drives engagement to all of their social media platforms. They have two goals which are to have more people aware of their environmental impact and to increase their overall sales, which a percentage is donated yearly to environmental causes (Lozada, 2020). Patagonia strategy wires the consumer to believe that the more they purchase from Patagonia the better it is for the environment and ultimately the company, which stands out by them being the most involved retail company in environmental initiatives, and just by purchasing from them you can directly help the environment due to proceeds going to research and other activism efforts related to their mission. With this in mind, some consider the company

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as a “deep green company” meaning that they are a business that is fully committed to green sustainability practices. They stand apart from other “green” companies because they actively and regularly get involved by encouraging employees and other business partners to get involved in local activism efforts (Zint, Frederick 2001).

The Interview Breakdown

To gain more information about how Patagonia Buckhead operates and implements structure within their organization, an interview was conducted with Sloan, their store manager, and Emily, their social media manager. These interviews were conducted loosely via email and in-person. There was a lot of insight into how they operate under a decentralized structure, how their corporate entity is implemented in their daily operations, and how their social media engagement is run. There was also an audit of their internal newsletter that gave even more insight into how they maintain internal accountability and announcements across all stores. Below, the main bullet points will consist of the interpreted response of these interviews and corporate newsletter audit.

Questions for Sloan, Store (Business) Manager – related to the operational structure of the Patagonia Buckhead location:

1. How do you maintain efficiency within your store? –

- By allowing a collaborative environment amongst all employees to give feedback, input, or an extra helping hand when available to whatever roles they want to.
- For example, Cesar’s main role is to be a customer experience specialist that adhere to in-store customer retail needs and operations like checking out and greeting customers, ringing them up, maintaining the aesthetics of the sales floor, etc., but he picked up the task of doing in-store product repairs for items that are either returned to customers, puppied out, or donated to local charities that receive worn wear for those in need. This led to him receiving a promotion to a specialist role that only he has specific to the Buckhead location.

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- (each product is given a lifetime warranty and if they can, will fix items based on each need if possible, will give store credit of original item pricing for new products to be obtained, or will give a refund)
- Puppies - Each year, each store will do an internal product giveaway of returned items that are not badly damaged or returns that are out of season and cannot be put back on the sales floor. They can be jackets, shirts, pants, accessories, outdoor gear, and various bags, etc. They do a random number system to determine the order of each employee, and their one guest gets to go in to choose an item.
- By allowing Cesar to expand within the store in terms of task he feels that he can help most in, he was able to receive upwards promotion as well as create a unique feature that most stores don't have, thus leading our store and team with a specific function that can enhance the experience of our store
- Overall, efficiency is maintained at this store by trusting the staff to do the functions of their roles, allowing them to enhance their functions, and maintaining accountability if the system shows a disruption. Usually if anything is messed up or not adhered to, it's easy to pinpoint the employee and function that is struggling and allows me the store manager to step in and refocus the process to get it back on track. Though each function and role rely on the next to create smooth operations, it is not absolutely dependent on the next therefore when issues arise, they can be removed and fixed then implemented back into the system with little to no disruption to the whole process

2. What methods do you employ to keep a motivated staff with positive attitudes?

- Freedom to do what they want within the allocated boundaries of the purpose of the role they are placed in while implementing cool incentives such as the puppy giveaways, internal corporate perks such as the generous PTO policies set in place and other formalities that come with each season related to specific events, and employing positive people who thrive in a collaborative environment with good vibes and energy.
- If there is anyone going through some personal issues or health issues and might not feel up to par, they are extended a WFH day for their own time to recoup and refocus so they can deliver the best Patagonia experience upon their return with little to no penalty, meaning they are still paid, providing it's not a consistent occurrence.
- Overall, it is a pretty easy environment to thrive, and I encourage them to get involved in things they love doing in their spare time here to make their work experience more enjoyable, which can be reflected in a lot of the outreach efforts and events the store and Patagonia entirely supports and involves themselves in.

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- Every location participates in specific outreach activities and other nature/environmental related activities and programs related generally to their specific store location. For example, Atlanta Buckhead location participates in a lot of Chattahoochee Reserve Nature Reserve work with scheduled cleanups and other tactics related to environmental protection while providing employees with incentives related to this organization and those alike such as fun events these organizations host at the store location weekly.

3. Who/what guides you in maintaining this store and its main functions?

- I report to the District Manager who is my main connection to the corporate entity in which we serve where I receive general expectations and implementations related to our store, but I mainly make the goals, functions, and other main responsibilities required for this store with help from others in specific roles designed to help or adhere to specific issues or situations each store might face independently.
 - For instance, we have some positions and roles at this store that others do not have at theirs due to the difference in which each store operates differently.
- There are minimal levels of hierarchy, so the chain of command is pretty easy to navigate due to each role and position working in more of a collaborative way vs. a concrete my way only kind of way. We work in a cross-functional team's way where the atmosphere is based on collaborative effort. This creates an organized promotion of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation that fosters a culture of creativity and openness. Overall, Patagonia promotes transparency and open communication while giving everyone all the tools they need to continue to make transformative efforts that allow Patagonia to stand out and continue making strides in the retail industry.
- For day-to-day operations, I rely on my in-store leaders to give me insight on daily situations related to our overall goals. I have monthly meetings and some weekly if needed to go over functions related to store tasks and upcoming events but for the most part, I communicate to all of the team via Microsoft Teams to keep not only a direct point of contact to me if and when I am needed but also a central location to find our goals and responsibilities for our daily operations.
 - My team leaders are in many of the different departments while also being able to serve in the customer experience role since that is the main focus and point of this job and what keeps our store thriving. I have team leaders on the sales floor, in the social media department, warehouse and shipping department, and event planning department and they are the ones that ensure each of their department's responsibilities are handled

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accordingly. They not only can come to me for any help related to their role but there are also leaders with corporate Patagonia they can reach out to in regard to what they expect their role to consist of. This not only gives them insight into why I may assign a specific task for that department to accomplish, but also allows them to receive more guidance tailored to that task in a collaborative way.

Questions for Emily, Social Media Manager (Digital Communications Manager) – related to the specifics of how digital content is produced and distributed (elaborated upon):

1. What is the process behind producing and sharing digital content?

- So, each month we are pretty much following a weekly posting schedule set in place by corporate's lead social media content coordinator (for our region we have Nick). He will send us specific things to post that are usually content professionally created and tailored to our store and our online community. For example, we post things tailored to those nature enthusiasts that might like things related to lakes and rivers or rock climbing, nature walking/hiking, etc. because those activities are most common to Atlanta. It would make no sense to promote content on our page related to the beach or to other regions that we cannot relate to like Hawaii or Denver because they tailor their content to fit more beach like activities and wear or more snow related activities and wear.
- In between that posting schedule will be blocks for us to fill in with daily highlights or events that might have happened or will happen related to our specific location and our partners. If something cool happens in the store or we want to showcase something out of the ordinary for our store, we will usually share it on our social media stories or if we have an event we might create a slide show short video to post as a reel or something similar to it on our social media pages. It's pretty easy though to manage long as you continue to document content which is easy to do everyday at Patagonia because we have something unique to share almost everyday in some form or fashion.
- Our engagement with our community is kept at a minimum due to us representing the corporate entity but there are moments where we can respond to positive customers and online community members that give props to Patagonia, our specific store, or something related to us in general. That is not the main facet of our position though as time is limited and focused more so on the display of content than engagement. The brand pretty much speaks for itself due to its uniqueness and notoriety, so consumers pretty much know what to expect when engaging with us as a brand, so you do not have to expect any clap backs or negative comments and luckily I have yet to experience any. If anyone ever has any issues, they might send us a DM and

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we direct it to a member of the customer experience team to handle from there.

2. How does your contribution reflect the overall expectations of the Patagonia brand and your store's specific location?

- For Patagonia as a brand, I support the marketing goals by emphasizing the quality of our products while always making sure we stay true to the nature of what our mission is. As a retail brand overall, we want to sell products and create revenue, but as an environmental enthusiast brand we want to highlight how our mission relates to all aspects of nature while we push for referendums and attention being brought to specific nature related topics. I feel like we do a good job at blending both to be honest and its pretty easy to contribute towards as the mission is clearly understood.
- My contributions overall support the brand and the store as they are both dependent on each other for efficiency and success. I highlight what our brand stand for as it pertains to our specific store's goals. It's a good mix between amongst all the content and it serves its purpose of showcasing what we have and what we offer while showing what we stand for and why it is also important. Overall, I feel that is what Patagonia expects of each store-to run and operate independently while being a good representative of each other at the same time.

3. How do you help the support the store build and sustain relationships with the key audience of your online community?

- Mainly through providing them with a visual way to experience what Patagonia is overall the best way possible while limiting the room for the lack thereof to foster. Meaning, my main purpose is to tell the stories, show the reason why, and how it can relate to our online community. I help build and sustain the relationships by giving our community something to expect as a result of having a relationship with us to begin with. Because Patagonia has been around for so long, people already know pretty much what to expect with our brand, you know its nature related and apparel related, I just maintain that expectation the best way I can by highlighting key elements that expand on that expectation while also, keeping the element of variety that allows the online community to continue to grow. This is how we create new relationships and maintain the ones we have.
- We could respond to comments and likes and dms all day if we really wanted to, but Patagonia and our store are more than that. That's what sets us apart from those who compete against us. We have cemented our way into the retail industry by adhering to certain standards that most if not all cannot replicate without adding their own adaptations. We do not need to do all the extra work of responding to all of the engagement because our brand is simple and transparent.

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You see what you get and can expect to experience with us. The images and their messages speak for themselves.

November Corporate Newsletter:

- They use tableau for detailed breakdowns of conversion rate tracking and updates
 - It highlights the highest conversion rate (week over week), which is the likelihood of converting a walk-in to a sale
 - Atlanta Buckhead is winning and has been for several months
 - Atlanta Buckhead location is one of the most successful Patagonia stores to date and has been for over 25 years (it will be 30 years in 2025)
 - Highlights ISO counts (in-store orders), meaning how many customers place online orders to be shipped to their homes
 - This is a big deal to the Patagonia corporate atmosphere as this is a main form of receiving maximum profits and creating more of a personalization effect with consumers.
 - Atlanta Buckhead is #2 in ISO counts out of over 30 stores in the US.
 - Highlights sales of each store
 - Was not allowed to view these numbers due to not being an internal staff member granted access
- Break down holiday shipping hours and other details related to their internal system for shipping products
- Introducing incoming and new products to be introduced at specific store locations
 - Usually items related to that specific area
 - For example, Hale'iwa, Hawaii location getting more gear related to what can be expected/needed relative to Hawaii
- Highlights new store locations and background on that location
 - Bariloche, Argentina being opened in an old home with designs relative to pre-technology era styles
- Gives monthly business recaps
 - November business recap states that Patagonia collectively missed the budget
 - meaning they did not make as much money as they desired, but they did have an increase compared to last year
 - It highlights the stores that beat original budget and last years
 - Atlanta Buckhead is one of those locations
 - Gives insight to black Friday stats
 - Made \$1.18million vs \$1.12million compared to last year showing a 5% increase
 - Gives stats into which products are doing the best (selling the most) in men's, women's, and children's categories

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- Gives reminders on internal perks like tuition reimbursement policy being updated and making employees aware of potential changes whether they directly or indirectly apply to them
- Highlights store promotions and job spotlights for positions available
 - Currently two positions for their Chicago location are available for a marketing and warehouse team leader
- Highlights key events across and store spotlight of the month
 - Focused on the grand opening for the Hawaii location
 - St. Paul store location highlighted in the November newsletter
- Gives reminder for internal book club meeting and what is expected
 - Life Lived Wild by Rick Ridgeway
 - Give insight into groups within internal Patagonia structure that all employees can be a part of creating an environment for collaboration and communication building across all locations and all positions regardless of position of authority

Section IV: Conclusion

In the beginning of our research our proposed hypotheses was that Patagonia's decentralized operational structure enhances their ability to engage and interact with their online community which results in stronger brand loyalty and maintaining their unique market position in the retail industry compared to their competitors with more centralized operations. Our first goal centered around the stores organizational structure was achieved through the interview with the store manager Sloan, our hypothesis is proven correct. She explains how the success of the store comes from being collaborative with all the store employees rather than solely relying on upper management to come up with new ideas and make changes. Thanks to the free-flowing structure, employees can pick up different skills, help one another, climb their way to different positions and therefore creating a harmonious workplace which is evident to loyal customers.

Our second goal focusing on the stores social media strategy playing a role in building a strong and loyal community was met through interviewing their social media manager Emily.

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She shared that through a mixed strategy of posting content corporate sends them and creating and posting content for their specific store they are able to create an authentic relationship with their audiences. She uses their platform to display their dedication to their mission, what the store offers, and how those products contribute to their mission. This strategy creates a sense of transparency and authenticity between the store and the community which can be a strong differentiator with their retail competitors.

Lastly, our third goal pertaining to Patagonia's newsletter, supported our hypothesis through looking at it as a case study. Although it's standard to have a newsletter or some sort of corporate communication to send out for the different stores to keep informed with stats about their budget, sales, and logistics what separates them from the others is the way they keep employee morale up. They have friendly competition among stores to see who's leading in sales, perks for employees like tuition reimbursement which showcases their investment in their people, as well as a care for their social lives with their book club.

In conclusion, our hypothesis has been proven correct. Patagonia is a unique business in the way they operate with a decentralized structure, but they use this to their advantage. Through focusing on their people whether it be the employee or the customer or engaging their community through social media this decentralized structure is what's contributed to their sustainable success in the past and will likely continue in the future which offers valuable lessons for their competitors.

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