Spacex- Falcon 9 series- Data Analysis

IBM Data Science Final Project

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Executive Summary

In a highly competitive business environment:

- SpaceX has revolutionized the launch of satellites with a concept of reusable launcher/booster: Falcon9/Falcon 9 Heavy
- The main advantage of this concept is the significant reduction in cost per kg.
- Reliability problems remain compared to classic launch vehicles like Soyuz or Ariane-5.
- For maintaining the "low cost" competitive advantage, compared with classic launchers, Falcon9 mission success is defined as the successful recovery or landing of the booster.
- Falcon9 booster successful recovery depends on features such as:
 - orbit
 - payload mass
 - booster versions
 - Launching sites...
- Based on these features, the best Machine Learning supervised classification model developed in this report, predicted booster recovery outcome with an accuracy close to 94%.

Introduction - Business understanding

- 1. **High Capital Investment**: Rocket launches demand massive upfront costs for development and infrastructure.

 Reusable rockets like SpaceX's Falcon 9 (~\$60-90M/launch) drastically cut per-launch expenses.
- 2. **Revenue Streams**: Income stems from satellite launches, crewed missions, and space tourism.

 Contracts like NASA's Artemis and internal projects like Starlink ensure steady cash flow.
- 3. **Market Dynamics**: The \$14.7B launch market grows with demand for satellites and constellations. SpaceX's low pricing (~\$6,000/kg) disrupts traditional and state-backed competitors.
- 4. **Cost Drivers and Risks**: Fuel, labor, and regulations drive costs; failures risk \$100M+ losses. Reusability reduces expenses but adds maintenance and geopolitical supply chain risks.
- 5. **Economic Impact and Scalability**: Launches fuel a \$447B space economy via satellite services. Scalability depends on reusability, standardization, and high launch frequency.

Methodology

Methodology

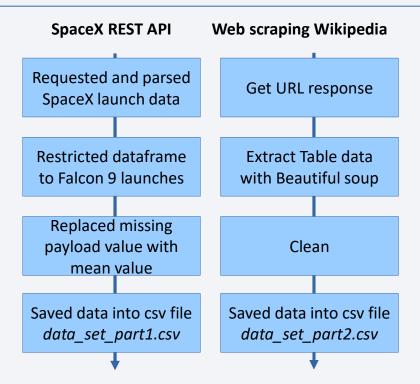
Methodology steps:

- 1. Data collection from open Data base and Wikipedia (Falcon9, Ariane-5).
- 2. Data wrangling.
- 3. Exploratory data analysis using SQL query and visualization of correlation between parameters.
- 4. Visual analytics: launch sites with Folium, success rates with Plotly Dash.
- 5. Classification Models development and validations. Selection of best predictive model.

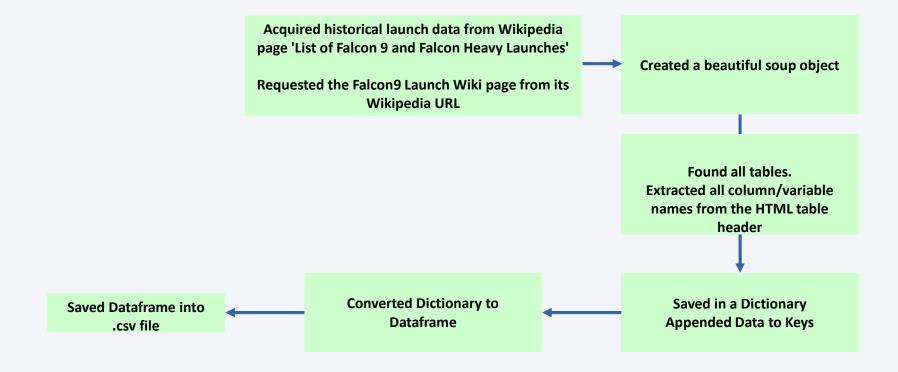
Data Collection

Data was collected from:

- -open source SpaceX REST API
- -webscraping Falcon9 launch data in Wikipedia
- -webscraping Ariane5 launcher data in Wikipedia *for reference graphs only.* (not prepared for ML)



Data Collection - Scraping



Data Collection – SpaceX API

Requested rocket launch data from SpaceX API url=https://api.spacexdata.com/v4/launches/past **Preliminary Stage** Decoded response as a .json file We defined a series of functions helping the **Turned it into Pandas dataframe** Requested and parsed use the API to extract info using SpaceX data with GET request identification numbers (IDs) in the launch data. Used the API with functions to get getBoosterVersion(data) info from IDs: getLaunchSite(data) **BoosterVersion** getPayloadData(data) **Payloads** getCoreData(data) LaunchSite Cores **Stored in List** Selected Falcon9 data only **Saved Dataframe into Assigned list to dictionary** Replaced missing payload mass **Converted to Dataframe** .csv file value with mean

Data Wrangling

Dataframe From SpaceX API

Identified missing values

Replaced missing "PayloadMass" value with mean value

SpaceX dataset Further Data wrangling

Identified:

- null values for each feature
- numerical and categorical features

Calculated:

- Number of launches on each site
- number and occurrence of each orbit
- number and occurrence of missions outcome per orbit type

Created a set of 1 stage booster landing outcomes

O True ASDS: successful landing on a drone ship

1 None None: failure to land

2 True RTLS: successful landing to a ground pad

3 False ASDS: failed landing on a drone ship

4 True Ocean: successful landing, specific region of the ocean

5 False Ocean: failed landing, specific region of the ocean

6 None ASDS: failure to land

7 False RTLS: failed landing to a ground pad

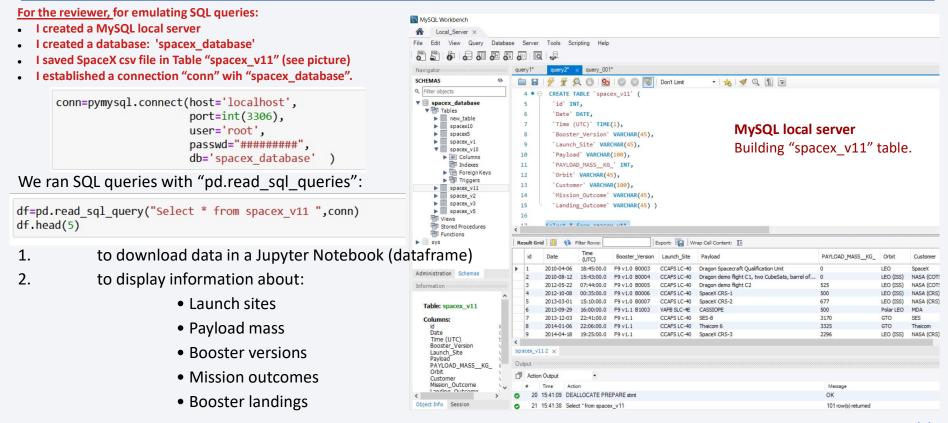
	FlightNumber	Date	BoosterVersion	PayloadMass	Orbit	LaunchSite	Outcome	Class
49	50	2018-05-11	Falcon 9	3750.00	GTO	KSC LC 39A	True ASDS	1
47	48	2018-04-02	Falcon 9	2760.00	ISS	CCAFS SLC 40	None None	0
50	51	2018-06-04	Falcon 9	5383.85	GTO	CCAFS SLC 40	None None	0
44	45	2018-01-31	Falcon 9	4230.00	GTO	CCAFS SLC 40	True Ocean	1
11	12	2015-01-10	Falcon 9	2395.00	ISS	CCAFS SLC 40	False ASDS	0

Created a Training label: 'Class'

Class = 0: booster landing failure

Class = 1: booster landing success

EDA with SQL



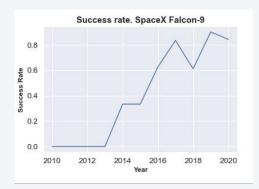
EDA with Data Visualization

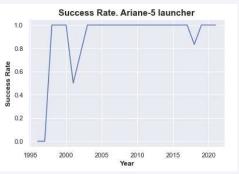
Exploring data in the Falcon 9 dataframe searching for factors and relations influencing launching success rate (booster recovery).

- Payload mass
- Orbit type
- Launch site

Graphs and scatter charts with Matplotlib – Seaborn and Analysis. Results with Scatter charts are labeled: class 0-1 (failure/success).

- Payload mass v. Flight Number
- Launch Site v. Flight number
- · Launch Site v. Payload mass
- Orbit v. Flight number
- Orbit v. Payload mass
- Histogram: success rate for each orbit
- Falcon 9 & Ariane-5 launch success yearly trend.





Build an Interactive Map with Folium

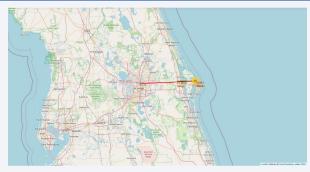
Launch success rate may depend on the location and proximity of a launch site. Folium Interactive Map was used for visualizing and analyzing SpaceX Launch Sites.

- · Used Interactive mapping library called Folium
- Identified all SpaceX launch sites on a map: Florida, California
- Included longitude and latitude info.
- Identified successful/failed launches for each site on map

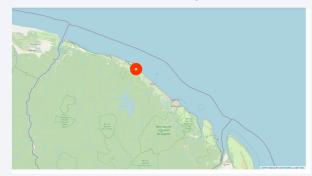
Calculated the distance between a launch site (CCAFS_SLC40 in Cape Canaveral, FL) and:

- Closest coastline
- Closest high traffic density railway: Florida East Coast Railway
- Closest high traffic density highway: Interstate 195
- Closest high density urban area: Orlando (FL)

For reference, we added the localization of European Space Agency (ESA) /ArianeEspace Ariane 5 and Soyuz launch pads in Kourou, French Guiana.



CCAFS_SLC40 in Cape Canaveral FL Coordinates: -80.577°, 28.563°



Ariane launch pad - Kourou in French Guiana Coordinates: -52.792°, **5.265° (~ Equator)**

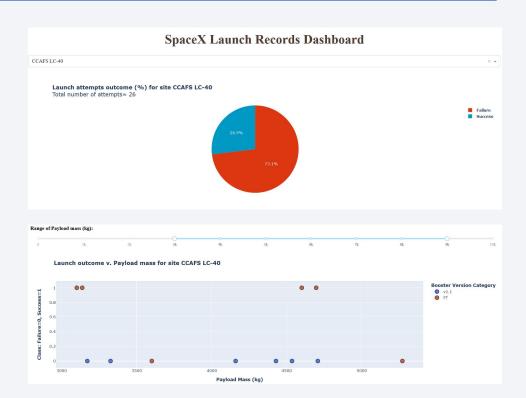
Build a Dashboard with Plotly Dash

We built an interactive dashboard with Plotly including:

- Dropdown menu for selecting launch sites
- Pie charts displaying success rate.
- Scatter chart displaying launch site, payload mass, success/failure
- Range slider for selecting range of payload mass (kg).

for analyzing SpaceX launch records features:

- site with largest successful launches.
- site with highest launch success rate
- payload range(s) with highest launch success rate
- payload range(s) with lowest launch success rate
- F9 Booster version (v1.0, v1.1, FT, B4, B5, etc.) with highest launch success rate.

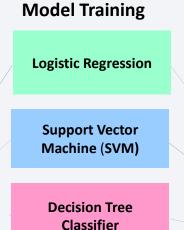


Predictive Analysis (Classification)



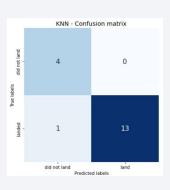
Note to the reviewer:

Data was shuffled in the split data process. For making results a bit more interesting "train_test_split(X, Y, test_size=0.2, random_state=3)"



K Nearest Neighbors Classifier

Optimization of models hyper-parameters with Scikit-learn GridSearchCV
Refined Optimization when possible (LR, SVM) for achieving highest accuracy with training set.



Testing set

Predictive analysis
Accuracy
Confusion matrix

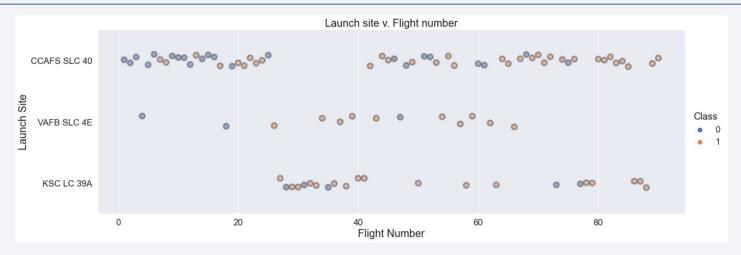
Selection of best model

Results

- Exploratory data analysis results
- Interactive analytics demo in screenshots
- Predictive analysis results

Insights from EDA

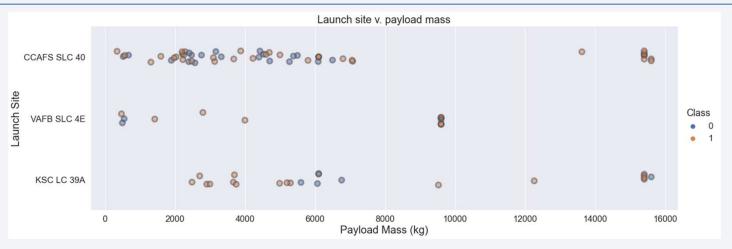
Launch Site v. Flight Number



The chart displays valuable info about:

- Chronology: flight numbers
- Number of flights per launch site
- Success/Failure per launch site
- Cape Canaveral CCAFS-SLC 40 is the most used launch site.
- CCAFS-SLC 40 concentrates most of failures, particularly in the early stage of Falcon9 project.
- Given CCAFS-SLC 40 southern location, most "risky" GTO and GEO launches may take place there.
- Additional info needed: orbit, payload mass

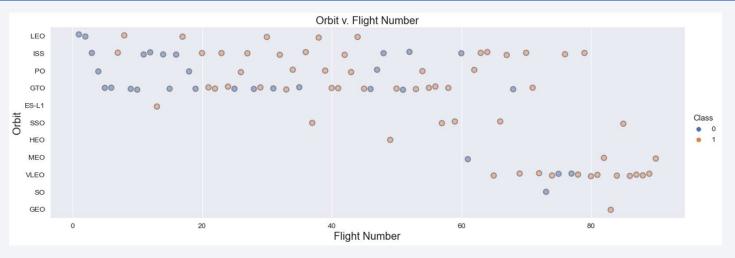
Launch Site v. Payload



The chart brings additional info:

- Payload mass per launch site
- Success/Failure per payload mass
- Given Falcon9 specifications, heavy payloads > 10000 kg are sent to low/medium orbits LEO/MEO only.
- It looks like the percentage of failures is lower for heavy payload. Which would indicate that low orbits are less risky to the success of the mission (recovery of booster).
- Light payloads are not necessarily all sent to GTO/GEO.
- More information is needed for extracting some correlation: success rate v. payload/orbit

Orbit Type v. Flight Number



The chart brings additional info:

- Number of flights per Orbit.
- Success rate per orbit
- The number of flights for: GEO, SO, HEO, ESL-1, MEO is not significant for concluding about success rate.
- PO, SSO, ISS, VLEO are low orbits
- GTO is a transfer orbit to GEO.

It looks like GTO are higher risk missions, low orbits are lower risk.

We confirm with the following histogram.

Success Rate vs. Orbit Type

Remarks:

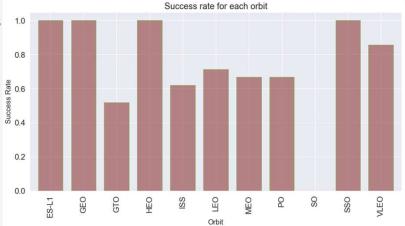
- GTO is a transfer orbit to GEO. Low thrust engines of the payload (satellite) complete the orbiting phase.
- We ignore results: GEO, SO, HEO, ESL-1, MEO. The number of flights is not significant.

GTO sees the lowest success rate as suggested in previous slide. SSO (polar low orbit) the highest one.

Success rate may strongly depend on both:

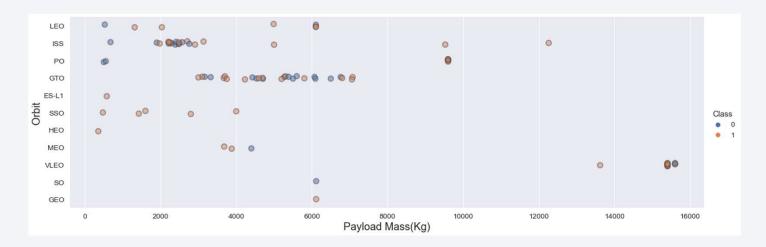
- payload mass
- orbit.

meaning the amount of energy deployed at lift-off, that may induce strong noise/vibrations that are known to damage satellites*. Vibrations could damage some of the booster electronics, inertial guidance systems... and cause booster recovery/landing failure. We also need additional info about payload mass/orbit. Fortunately it is available.



^{*} https://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1996ESASP.386..237F

Orbit Type v. Payload



The chart brings final info about "Orbit v. Payload". It describes the distribution "success rate v. (payload, orbit)" Main trends:

- Maximum success rate with: low orbit except (ISS) and low payload mass
- ISS: based on "Orbit Type v. Flight Number" 5/8 failures occurred in the early stage of Falcon 9 project. When Falcon 9 reliability was low.
- Between 2000 and 7500 kg, success rate seems to be evenly distributed for GTO.
- Independently of payload mass, GTO is a risky "orbit" affecting missions success rate. Falcon 9 reliability improves over time, but there are still recent failed booster recovery after GTO launches.

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Total Number of Successful and Failure Mission Outcomes

Total number of successful and failure mission outcomes (from SQL queries).

Here success is defined based on properly launching/orbiting payload. Success rate is very high: ~99% like Ariane-5.

Nevertheless, Falcon9 maintains a competitive advantage in terms of cost per kg compared with classic launchers like Ariane-5, **only if the reusable booster is recovered.**

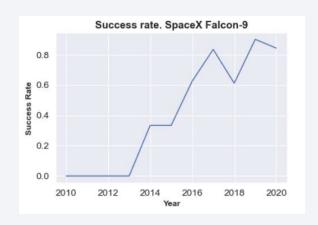
Therefore Falcon9 "success rate" in this report is defined after successful booster recovery (landing).

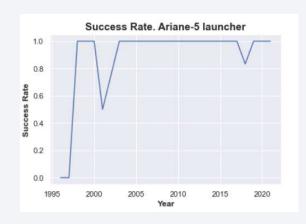
```
# sql query
qsf= """Select (Select Count(Mission_Outcome) from spacex_v11 where Mission_Outcome like '%Success%')
    as Successful_Missions,
        (Select Count(Mission_Outcome) from spacex_v11
        where Mission_Outcome like '%Failure%') as Failed_Missions """

success_failure= pd.read_sql_query(qsf,conn)
print(success_failure)

Successful_Missions Failed_Missions
0 100 1
```

Launch Success Yearly Trend





Falcon 9 reliability significantly improves over time.

Success rate, here defined after successful booster recovery for Falcon9, depends on:

- Payload mass
- Orbit
- + other factors we investigate next
- Independently of payload mass, orbits, Ariane 5 has a close to 100% success rate for 82 flights since 2003.
- Falcon9 average booster recovery success rate si 66%.
- Success rate currently sufficient for SpaceX financial viability.

Launch Sites and Proximities Analysis

Launch Site Names & Records

Before starting launch sites analysis, we list the names of all launch sites and some launch records (from SQL queries).

```
df_unique_launchsites=pd.read_sql_query("Select distinct Launch_Site from spacex_v11 ",conn)
print(df_unique_launchsites)

Launch_Site
0 CCAFS LC-40
1 VAFB SLC-4E
2 KSC LC-39A
3 CCAFS SLC-40
```

There are 4 distinct launch sites

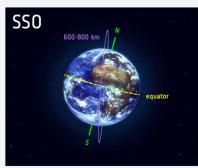
5 records where launch sites begin with `CCA`

df_launchsites_CCA5=pd.read_sql_query("Select * from spacex_v11 where Launch_Site Like 'CCA%' Limit 5",conn)
df_launchsites_CCA5

id	Date	Time (UTC)	Booster_Version	Launch_Site	Payload	PAYLOAD_MASSKG_	Orbit	Customer	Mission_Outcome	Landing_Outcome
0 1	2010-04-06	0 days 18:45:00	F9 v1.0 B0003	CCAFS LC-40	Dragon Spacecraft Qualification Unit	0	LEO	SpaceX	Success	Failure (parachute)
1 2	2010-08-12	0 days 15:43:00	F9 v1.0 B0004	CCAFS LC-40	Dragon demo flight C1, two CubeSats, barrel of	0	LEO (ISS)	NASA (COTS) NRO	Success	Failure (parachute)
2 3	2012-05-22	0 days 07:44:00	F9 v1.0 B0005	CCAFS LC-40	Dragon demo flight C2	525	LEO (ISS)	NASA (COTS)	Success	No attempt
3 4	2012-10-08	0 days 00:35:00	F9 v1.0 B0006	CCAFS LC-40	SpaceX CRS-1	500	LEO (ISS)	NASA (CRS)	Success	No attempt
4 5	2013-03-01	0 days 15:10:00	F9 v1.0 B0007	CCAFS LC-40	SpaceX CRS-2	677	LEO (ISS)	NASA (CRS)	Success	No attempt

Launch site v. Orbit type





We added that scattered chart, which has implications in the analysis of launch sites.

- VAFB SLC 4E launch site in California, is used only for PO and SSO orbits, **meaning low altitude polar orbits.** North or south? bound flights over the ocean.
- All GTO/GEO launches take place in Florida launch sites. As close as possible to the
 equator where earth tangential velocity is maximum, acting like a slingshot at lift off,
 from west to east over the ocean. (see gif). This helps with orbiting GEO satellites
 with less energy.

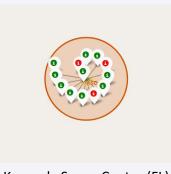
SpaceX: All launch sites



Falcon 9 Success/Failed launches for each site



Vandenberg Space Launch Complex 4 (CA)
VAFB SLC-4E



Kennedy Space Center (FL) KSC LC 39A



Cape Canaveral (FL) CCAFS-LC40



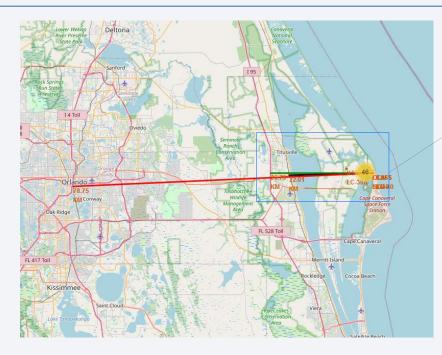
Cape Canaveral (FL) CCAFS-SLC40

Launch Site	CIASS	
CCAFS LC-40	0	19
	1	7
CCAFS SLC-40	0	4
	1	3
KSC LC-39A	0	3
	1	10
VAFB SLC-4E	0	6
	1	4

Table: Synthesis of launches outcomes

Class 0= failure Class 1= success

Distances between a launch site to its proximities





Distance from CCAFS_SLC40 to:

- Closest coast: ~900 m
- Florida East Coast Railway: 22.0 km
- Highway I 95: 26.8 km
- Orlando: 78.75 km

Launch sites are close to coasts. For safety issues if launcher is lost in the early stage of the flight.

Rockets are launched:

- From West to East over the ocean in Florida.
- North or South bound over the ocean in California. (Polar orbits only) Launch sites are relatively far from populated areas for protecting population from serious incidents at lift off: explosion on the launch pad.

ESA Unique Launch site – Kourou, French Guiana.

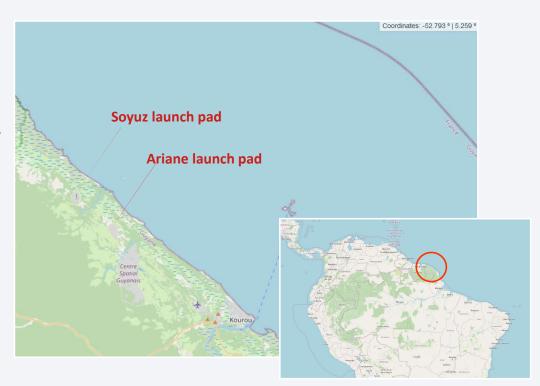
European Space Agency (ESA)/ArianeEspace launch sites in Kourou, French Guiana (France).

Kourou launch sites: Ariane, Soyuz

- are very close to the Equator: it's a strong advantage for GTO/GEO flights
- are in a remote area far from any high density inhabited area and high traffic infrastructures
- Are close to the coast

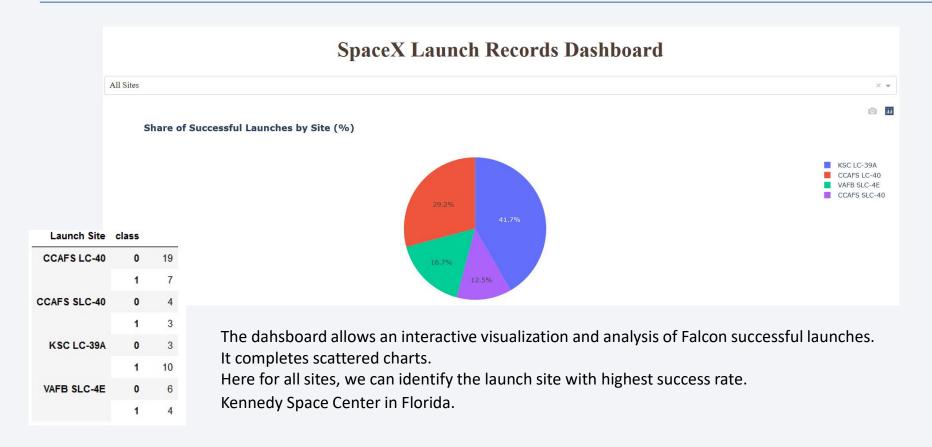
Strong Advantage over SpaceX, in terms of safety and GTO/GEO flights and energy required at lift-off.

SpaceX could compete and reduce energy at lift-off for GTO-GEO flights by introducing a concept like "Sea Launch".



Build a Dashboard With Plotly Dash

SpaceX Falcon 9: Launch success count for all sites

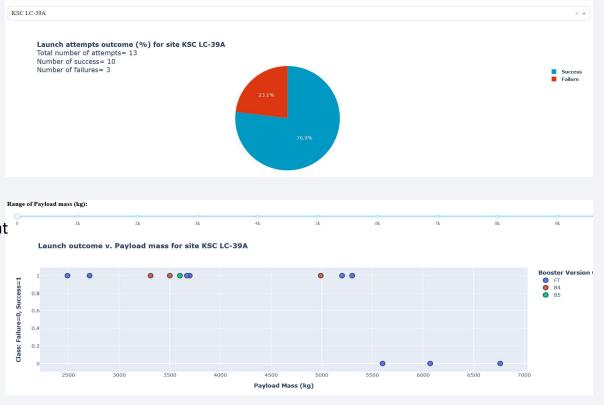


SpaceX Falcon9 Launch site with highest launch success ratio

KSC LC-39A

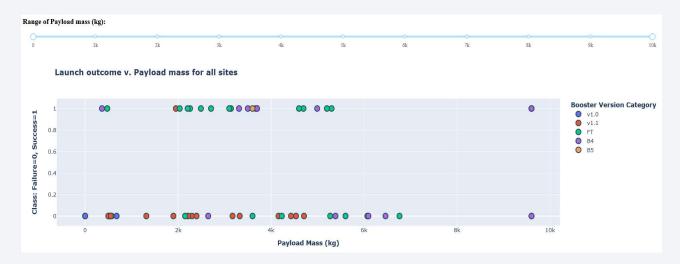
Kennedy Space Center in Florida. 13 flights, 10 successful missions.

- Heavy payload are "high risk"
- Success does not seem to depend upon boosters versions with low mass payload <5500kg.
- B5 and FT are the most reused launchers.
 Data is not sufficient, but may indicates that they are as reliable as 1 time launchers.



Launch outcome v. Payload mass (all sites)

- V1.0 and v1.1 are early launchers with low reliability.
 Landing legs, were pioneered on the Falcon 9 v1.1 version, but that version never landed intact.
 They were phased out in 2015.
- FT: "Full Thrust" is the next generation and has the highest success rate for payload mass under 6 tons. Including with "drone landing" (see details in next slide).
- Many FT flights are done with reused launchers. And show good reliability.
- · Heavy payload are "high risk".



Successful Drone Ship Landing with Payload mass between 4000 and 6000 kg

List the names of Falcon 9 boosters which have successfully landed on drone ship and had payload mass greater than 4000 but less than 6000 kg

Recent Full Thrust (FT) boosters exhibit the highest success rate on drone ship landing. Including with GTO flights.

It bodes well if SpaceX introduces a concept like "Sea Launch" for GTO launches at sea, close to the equator.

```
# sql query
q_boost_succ= """ select Booster_Version from spacex_v11 where Landing_Outcome = 'Success (drone ship)'
and PAYLOAD_MASS__KG_ > 4000
and PAYLOAD_MASS__KG_ < 6000 """

Booster_success_landing=pd.read_sql_query(q_boost_succ,conn)

print(Booster_success_landing)

Booster_Version
0     F9 FT B1022
1     F9 FT B1026
2     F9 FT B1021.2
3 F9 FT B1031.2
```

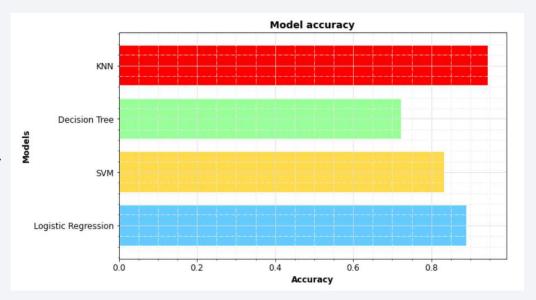
Predictive Analysis

Classification Accuracy

Classification Accuracy with test set.

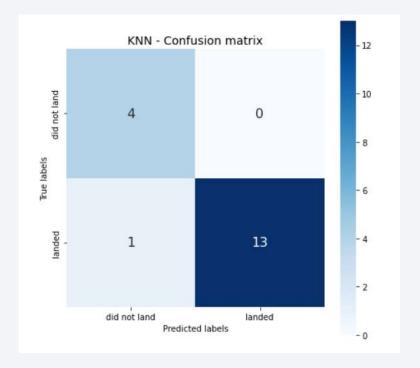
Results with "train test split" random_state=3

- Optimization of SVM and LR hyper-parameters was refined for increasing accuracy with train set.
- It did not necessarily improved accuracy with test set.
- Test set is too small.
- In our case, KNN exhibits the best accuracy: ~94%



Confusion Matrix

- k-nearest neighbors algorithm (k-NN) is the best "predictor"
- The model perfectly predicts mission failure
- 1 false negative for successful booster landing (recovery)



Conclusions

- I have evaluated success through the Falcon 9 booster recovery process, analyzing data from Falcon 9 and Wikipedia to identify key factors: payload, orbit, booster type, and launch sites.
- 2. Using a supervised classification model, we predicted outcomes with 93% accuracy.
- 3. While Falcon 9 recovery is riskier than traditional launchers, its success rate—improving over time and at 65%—ensures cost-competitiveness against Ariane 5/6. GEO/GTO missions remain challenging due to energy demands and potential system damage.
- SpaceX could enhance success by adopting equatorial launches, like "Sea Launch," leveraging recent drone ship landings.
- 5. Starship's potential may further dominate competitors.

References and Jupyter Notebooks

Appendix: SQL queries

Include any relevant assets like Python code snippets, SQL queries, charts, Notebook outputs, or data sets that you may have created during this project

Total Payload Mass

Calculate the total payload carried by boosters from NASA (2 methods)

```
# For validation purposes... sum in df NASA CRS 'PAYLOAD MASS KG' column
df NASA CRS=pd.read sql query("Select * from spacex v11 where Customer='NASA (CRS)'",conn)
print(df_NASA_CRS.head(2))
print('----')
print('Total payload mass, customer= NASA (CRS):', df_NASA_CRS['PAYLOAD_MASS__KG_'].sum(),' kg')
   id
            Date
                      Time (UTC) Booster Version Launch Site
                                                                   Payload \
0 4 2012-10-08 0 days 00:35:00 F9 v1.0 B0006 CCAFS LC-40 SpaceX CRS-1
1 5 2013-03-01 0 days 15:10:00 F9 v1.0 B0007 CCAFS LC-40 SpaceX CRS-2
   PAYLOAD MASS KG
                         Orbit
                               Customer Mission Outcome Landing Outcome
0
                500 LEO (ISS) NASA (CRS)
                                                  Success
                                                               No attempt
1
                677 LEO (ISS) NASA (CRS)
                                                               No attempt
                                                  Success
Total payload mass, customer= NASA (CRS): 45596 kg
# Based on SQL only...
sql nasa crs mass= """ Select sum(PAYLOAD MASS KG ) as 'Total payload mass (kg) NASA CRS'
                   from spacex v11
                   where Customer='NASA (CRS)' """
payload NASA CRS=pd.read sql query(sql nasa crs mass,conn)
print(payload NASA CRS)
   Total payload mass (kg) NASA CRS
                           45596.0
```

Average Payload Mass by F9 v1.1

Calculate the average payload mass carried by booster version F9 v1.1

First Successful Ground Landing Date

Find the dates of the first successful landing outcome on ground pad

```
min_Date_success_landing=pd.read_sql_query("select min(Date) from spacex_v11 where Landing_Outcome = 'Success (ground pad)'",conn)
print(min_Date_success_landing)
    min(Date)
0 2015-12-22
```

Boosters Carried Maximum Payload

List the names of the boosters which have carried the maximum payload mass

```
# sql query
qboost= """Select distinct Booster Version, max(PAYLOAD MASS KG ) as max payload mass
from spacex v11
group by Booster Version
order by max_payload_mass desc"""
boost max load= pd.read sql query(qboost,conn)
boost_max_load.head(5)
   Booster_Version max_payload_mass
     F9 B5 B1049.4
                            15600
     F9 B5 B1060.2
                            15600
     F9 B5 B1048.4
                            15600
     F9 B5 B1048.5
                            15600
     F9 B5 B1056.4
                            15600
```

2015 Launch Records

List the failed landing_outcomes in drone ship, their booster versions, and launch site names for in year 2015

Rank Landing Outcomes Between 2010-06-04 and 2017-03-20

Rank the count of landing outcomes (such as Failure (drone ship) or Success (ground pad)) between the date 2010-06-04 and 2017-03-20, in descending order

```
# sql query
q count landing= """ Select Landing Outcome, count(*) as count landings
                     from spacex v11
                     where Date between '2010-06-04' and '2017-03-20'
                     group by Landing Outcome
                     order by count_landings desc """
count_landing= pd.read_sql_query(q_count_landing,conn)
count landing.head(10)
     Landing_Outcome count_landings
            No attempt
                                 10
      Failure (drone ship)
                                  5
    Success (drone ship)
       Controlled (ocean)
                                  3
                                  3
4 Success (ground pad)
                                  2
     Uncontrolled (ocean)
      Failure (parachute)
7 Precluded (drone ship)
```

Thank You