

CUSTOMER SUCCESS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CUSTOMER
RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT

MIKAYLA RAINES. Customer Success and The Transformation of Customer Relationships.
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The construct of “customer satisfaction” has been used for several decades in marketing to achieve outcomes such as customer loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, resistance to competition, and customer equity. Recent research, however, has indicated little to no correlation between customer satisfaction and many of these outcomes. A more recent marketing construct is “customer delight,” where affective bonds and positive associations are the foundations for customer relationships. While customer delight has numerous advantages, an important limitation is that it can only be used with certain types of products and consumption situations.

This study introduces the academic construct of “customer success,” an objective tool that could redefine customer relationships and be defined as an objective and mathematically based strategic process to maximize customer-desired outcomes. A long-term customer success strategy is customer-driven and designed to be mutually beneficial to both an organization and its customers. While the construct of customer success has been sporadically used by practitioners in the past, the use of the term has often been arbitrary, and the construct has never been precisely defined.

First, drawing on the reverse logic framework (RLF) of relationship marketing, the customer valuation model, and return on relationships (ROR), this study will use Hunt’s indigenous theory, inductive realist approach to help build the initial theoretical framework for the construct of customer success. Then, this study uses this construct in a government-to-customer (G2C) market scenario to test a series of hypotheses to evaluate government-achieved

customer success for COVID-19 pandemic response outcomes. This study will conclude with theoretical and managerial research contributions and provide directions for future research.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, my rock, April Raines. Your ambitious and dedicated spirit motivates me to push forward and seek the most from life. Thank you for pushing me to be my best. I would not be where I am today without your support physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American Community Survey
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
B2G	Business-to-Government
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEB	Corporate Executive Board
COS	Cost of Selling
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSM	Customer Success Management
CSSE	Center for Systems Science and Engineering
CTP	COVID Tracking Project
CVM	Customer Valuation Model
G2C	Government-to-Consumer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	General Electric
HHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services
IR	Inductive Realist
JHU	John Hopkins University
MBA	Master of Business Administration
OIDP	Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy
RA	Resource Advantage
RLF	Reverse Logic Framework
ROR	Return on Relationships
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The customer is at the center of all business activities. "Without the customer, there is no business" (Erevelles et al., 2021, p.1). It is a long-held belief in marketing that firms that understand and satisfy customers' needs will be successful in the marketplace (Knox et al., 2003). Profitability depends on the quality of a firm's relationships with its customers. By focusing on customer relationships, companies can increase the likelihood of achieving their objectives, sustain a competitive advantage, and enhance customer equity.

Customer satisfaction, which focuses on customer needs and is an important construct that has been used in marketing for decades, is a post-purchase measure of whether a customer's needs were adequately met. The most common model used in customer satisfaction is the expectations-disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980, c.f., Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992), which measures satisfaction by determining if customers' pre-purchase expectations have been met or exceeded after consumption. If expectations are not met, the result is customer dissatisfaction. However, more recent literature does not necessarily support the notion that customer satisfaction is the only construct that can achieve desired marketing outcomes such as customer loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, resistance to competition, and customer equity (e.g., Chung et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2020). Several factors may contribute to this; for instance, customer expectations are subjective, or all firms in a competitive marketplace may exceed customer expectations.

More recently, the construct of customer delight has been shown to help build enduring relationships with customers by focusing on emotional reactions elicited throughout the entirety of an experience with the product or service. These emotions include but are not limited to joy,

love, thrill, wonder, exhilaration, pride, gratitude, and surprise (Erevelles and Fukawa, 2013; Ball and Barnes, 2017). Emotional bonds are relatively enduring and difficult to break compared with the cognitive bonds associated with customer satisfaction (Smith and Bolton, 2002). While customer delight has many advantages, especially as it relates to branding in specific product categories, it may not be helpful in certain product categories or consumption situations, especially for utilitarian products, commodities, and purchase situations where the price is the key determining factor. For these situations, the limitations of customer satisfaction and customer delight may be overcome with the use of the construct of customer success.

Customer success, which is objective and mathematical, can be used as a tool to achieve customer equity, as a metric for competitive comparison, and as a measure of differently focused customer-desired outcomes. The construct of customer success can be adapted to various purchase situations, including B2C (business-to-consumer), B2B (business-to-business), and G2C (government-to-consumer) market scenarios. Customer success is not intended to replace customer satisfaction or customer delight; it is simply designed to be another important tool in the marketing and customer relationship toolbox.

Motivation and Research Gap

The construct of customer satisfaction, a long-standing dominant paradigm in customer relationship management (CRM), was initially developed as a marketing tool to better address customer needs in competitive marketplaces (Duddy and Revzan, 1947, 1953; Kotler, 1972; Hunt, 1991). While the construct of customer satisfaction has several strengths, it also has numerous noteworthy limitations.

First, while constructs such as customer satisfaction and customer delight consider the needs and desires of customers, they generally are firm-originated strategies. The joint creation of value with the customer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), or *co-creation*, generally is not associated with these types of constructs. Co-creation allows customers to be more engaged (Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2014) and helps firms proactively keep up with the changing needs of the customer, which may explain a relatively tenuous relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. For example, Kamakura et al. (2002) argue in their service-chain logic that the use of customer satisfaction measures will assist companies in customer retention and attracting new customers. However, their approach is solely company and product-driven, which limits the ability to identify the “right” or “loyal” customers to retain (Kamakura et al., 2002). Although CRM constructs like customer satisfaction increases company retention, its ability to obtain new customers, and consumer spending growth, among others (Kamakura et al., 2002; Fornell et al., 2010), their impact is not as meaningful as assumed. Kumar et al. (2013) concluded that “the customer satisfaction–loyalty main effect is indeed weak . . . Customer satisfaction, by itself, can hardly change customer loyalty in a significant way” (p. 247). Because “satisfaction only affects loyalty indirectly” (c.f., Schirmer et al., 2018, p. 312), other moderating or mediating variables may be needed to generate a positive relationship. According to existing customer satisfaction literature, it is important to measure the customer expectations of not only the brand but its competitors as this can accurately predict actual repurchase behavior (Mittal and Kamakura, 2001). While this may also be true for relationships between other non-CRM-related variables, marketers face a challenge in determining which moderating or mediating variables matter to different customers (Erevelles et al., 2003).

Second, current CRM constructs such as customer satisfaction are generally not explicitly *customer-centric*. Customer centricity aligns a firm's offerings with the needs of a select group of customers "to maximize their long-term financial value to the firm" (Fader, 2012, p. 39). Lack of customer centricity may result in firms investing in activities that may increase customer satisfaction but not result in a long-term competitive advantage (Reichheld, 2022). While such investments may improve customers' post-purchase experience, they may reduce a firm's profitability. Thus, firms may find it more challenging to expand offerings that may result in higher levels of competitive advantage in the long run.

Third, currently used constructs such as customer satisfaction and customer delight are generally relatively subjective measures. A firm can overestimate or misinterpret customer satisfaction outcomes for a variety of reasons (Nobar and Rostamzadeh, 2018) and believe that it is performing well in the marketplace when it is not. For example, when a company meets or exceeds customer expectations, customers are generally considered to be satisfied. If customer expectations are low, the firm continues to deliver to a supposedly satisfied customer base (Rust and Zahorik, 1993) at the expense of pursuing proactive improvements in service delivery (Nobar and Rostamzadeh, 2018).

Satisfaction responses can be cognitive or affective (Giese and Cote, 2000). Other satisfaction models (perceived performance, norms-based, attribution, and affective) that were designed to overcome some of the limitations of the expectations-disconfirmation model have similar limitations. For example, with the perceived performance model, when a customer interacts with products, especially new products, their perceived notions of performance may not always reflect actual performance. Similarly, for norms-based models, if a customer has grown accustomed to a product performing in a certain way, it can be difficult to change the way the

customer views that product category (Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992) until a superior competitor enters the market. Thus, using prior product or service norms can limit insights from customer satisfaction. For attribution models, regardless of whether a product outcome was positive or negative, customers often rationalize the outcome until they realize that competing products may offer superior outcomes (Tsiros et al., 2004). With affective models, a customer's emotional responses influence their purchase behavior. Over time, customers' behavior becomes resilient to affect, and customer perceptions are no longer influenced by emotion, which may limit the realization of customer satisfaction (White, 2010).

Fourth, current CRM constructs such as customer satisfaction and customer delight are generally designed for traditional mass-marketing strategies rather than for *mass-customization* strategies. Generally, customer satisfaction is a subjective measure that represents a collective pool of customer expectations compared with customer experiences (Andrlic et al., 2013). Firms that solely use customer satisfaction measures do not consider that customer desires may vary dramatically within segments and that constructs such as customer satisfaction may conceal a considerable prevalence of "customer sacrifice" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Customers' pre-conceived expectations may or may not reflect current marketplace offerings at the time of interaction and may ignore factors such as the customer's current state and knowledge level (Anderson et al., 1994). A person who has never driven a Tesla EV (electric vehicle), for instance, may be easily satisfied with the Tesla Model S. However, a customer who has driven the Mercedes EVS (electric vehicle) may find the Tesla somewhat basic, leading to questionable satisfaction insight (Kolodny, 2018).

Fifth, current CRM constructs, such as customer satisfaction and customer delight, do not generally reflect *actual value* derived by the customer. For example, customer satisfaction may

result from a previously accepted mediocre standard of service (Rust and Zahorik, 1993). Because customer expectations evolve to align with the value received and with marketplace changes, many customers may be "just satisfied" with a firm's offerings (Rust and Zahorik, 1993; Wolter et al., 2019; Fripp, 2022.). As each new experience changes customers' expectations (Wolter et al., 2019), high levels of customer satisfaction may be difficult to sustain over time. Thus, to maintain customer satisfaction, the company may have to constantly increase its value proposition and enhance the quality of its products and services.

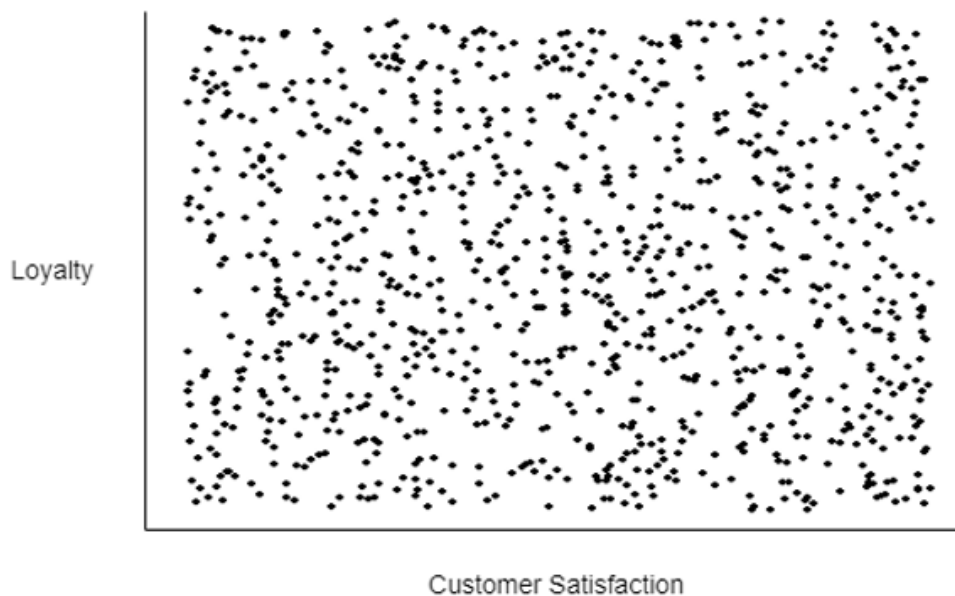
Additionally, Bloemer and Kasper (1995), who suggest that not all types of customer satisfaction may lead to loyalty (Miranda et al., 2018), argue that there are at least two types of customer satisfaction: "latent" and "manifest" (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). Latent satisfaction describes customers who may be satisfied but may not become loyal or returning customers; manifest satisfaction describes customers who are more likely to continue to have increased post-purchase interactions with the company (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). It may often be difficult to discern the difference since the actual value desired by customers is not measured.

This research attempts to address at least the following research gaps in the current CRM literature: (i) the relative focus on the value created by a firm (as opposed to co-created) strategy; (ii) the relative focus on an offering-centric (as opposed to a customer-centric) strategy; (iii) the relative focus on subjective (as opposed to objective) customer outcome measures; (iv) the relative focus on mass-marketed (as opposed to mass-customized) customer outcomes; (v) the focus on relative value (as opposed to the actual value) created; and (vi) the relatively tenuous relationship between marketing outcomes and customer loyalty.

From the practitioner's standpoint, there is evidence to support the notion that the relationship between current CRM constructs and customer loyalty is not as strong as it is

assumed. Further explanation is provided in the figures below. Dixon et al. (2013) of the CEB (Corporate Executive Board) group, a very well-known and highly regarded practitioner group, used a quantitative model and millions of data points to analyze how customers' service interactions impact customer loyalty. They did a widespread study in which they had access to the "world's largest network of customer service organizations (the Customer Contact Leadership Council)" (Dixon et al., 2013, p. 9). A global survey was conducted in which over 97,000 customers were asked to answer questions regarding their recent interactions with firms either via the internet or call center. According to Dixon et al. (2013), after they found no statistical relationship, the results suggested that there was little relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, as shown in Figure 1 below.

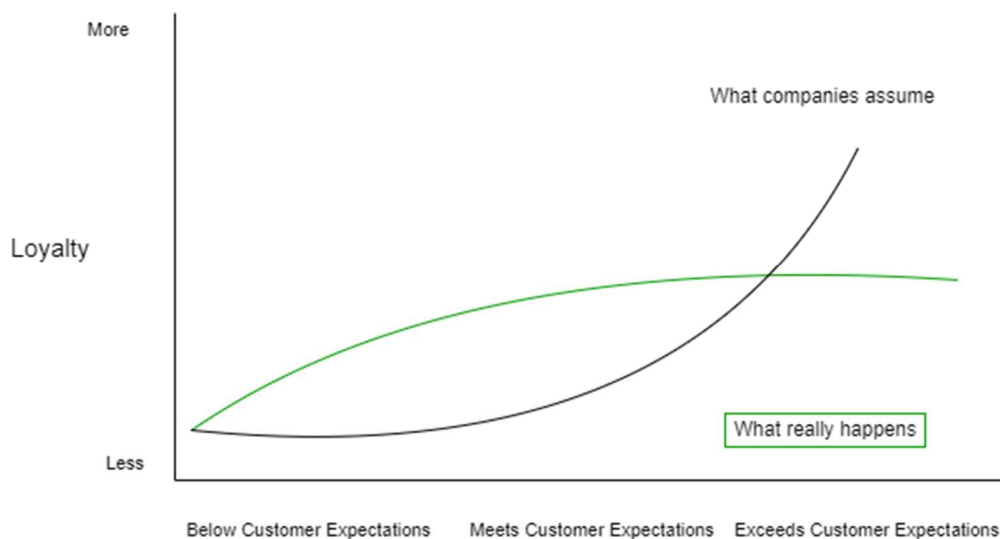
Figure 1: Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty



Source: Dixon et al., 2013, p.17

According to Dixon et al. (2013), it is typically assumed by companies that exceeding customer expectations (e.g., customer delight) greatly increases customer loyalty. However, their data study suggests that there is little to no difference in the loyalty between satisfied customers and delighted customers. It should be noted that Dixon et al. (2013) uses “exceeded customer expectations” to describe customer delight. According to Dixon et al. (2013), many companies may overestimate the impact that customer satisfaction or customer delight has on customer loyalty. When various customer interactions were analyzed, the results suggested that there is little benefit or return when companies focus on meeting or exceeding customer expectations. In sum, companies overestimate and assume that as customer expectations are increasingly met or exceeded, loyalties increase as well, as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Perception vs. Actuality: Impact on Customer Loyalty



Source: Dixon et al., 2013, p. 13-14

In sum, despite its many strengths, the concepts of customer satisfaction and customer delight have several limitations that represent important gaps in the extant literature. In today's hyper-competitive marketplace, there is a need for a construct that may help overcome some of these limitations, which is the primary motivation for my research.

Problem Statement and Research Goals

Long-term customer relationships are critical for business success. Currently, the majority of companies provide customer-focused products and services based on the concept of customer satisfaction or customer delight. Even though both are popular tools used in marketing, they have several limitations. Although demonstrating powerful outcomes as a result of its use, the concept of customer success has been used by only a few practitioners and is under-developed in the academic literature and in marketing and business. Continuing the theoretical development of this concept can guide researchers in this area and help practitioners achieve better marketing outcomes.

This study aims to provide an initial theoretical framework for the construct of customer success that highlights its foundational principles and underscores its use as a tool for building stronger customer relationships in consumption scenarios where customer satisfaction and customer delight may not provide meaningful outcomes or insight. In doing so, I provide empirical illustrations to demonstrate how the use of customer success can achieve desired marketing outcomes, such as purchase intentions, customer loyalty, and profit margins.

Secondary data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Center, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MultiState, and the U.S. Census Bureau were analyzed. Information gathered from all 50 states was used to evaluate key

variables related to the achievement of customer success and to suggest customer success strategies for the next pandemic (or future recurrences of COVID-19). Taken individually and jointly, the theoretical and empirical components of this dissertation are expected to provide several theoretical and practical contributions to the existing literature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Satisfaction

Existing marketing literature describes customer satisfaction as “an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or service over time” (Anderson et al., 1994, p. 54) and as a “person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment, which resulted from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome against his/her expectations” (Kotler and Keller, 2006, p.144). Customer satisfaction impacts marketing outcomes, such as customer loyalty, repurchase rates, profit, and market share (Rust and Zahorik, 1993). A change in customer satisfaction can be measured as a change in dollars earned (Rust and Zahorik, 1993). Research on customer satisfaction suggests that customers are satisfied when the services they receive are consistent with their expectations and lead to a positive customer experience (Nobar and Rostamzadeh, 2018).

The notion of customer satisfaction supports the expectations-disconfirmation model that suggests that before purchasing a product, customers have already formed an expectation of their purchase outcomes (Oliver 1980; Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992). Through the expectations-disconfirmation model, customers are disconfirmed positively or negatively depending on whether the product meets, exceeds, or does not meet expectations (Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992). Other models are also used to determine customer satisfaction in various consumption scenarios, such as the perceived performance model, multiple process models, attribution models, affective models, and equity models (see Table 3; c.f., Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992, pg. 111). For example, with affective models, when examining a customer's satisfaction with a product, the customer's positive or negative affective response plays an important role (Westbrook, 1987; Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992). Affective responses have also been shown to influence customer opinions, complaint

behavior, and word-of-mouth (W-O-M) communications (Westbrook, 1987; Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992). However, despite the many advantages of affective models, a focus on customer cognitive responses has generally been more prevalent in the literature through the years than has a focus on affective responses. Additionally, attribution models focus on attributions to explain how customers evaluate potential factors that cause product success or failure (Folkes, 1984; Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992), which is attributed by customers to factors such as locus of causality, stability, and controllability (Folkes, 1984; Erevelles and Leavitt, 1992). Table 1 summarizes the important characteristics of some commonly used customer satisfaction models.

Table 1: Key Characteristics of Common Models of Customer Satisfaction

(c.f., Erevelles, and Leavitt, 1992)

Model	Primary Characteristics
The Expectations-Disconfirmation Model	The expectations of the consumers during pre-purchase may be invalidated positively or negatively, leading to satisfaction or absolute lack of satisfaction.
The Perceived Performance Model	Perceived performance of some products is not dependent on any initial expectation. It determines the perceived satisfaction of the consumer.
Norms Derived Model	According to this model, brands are evaluated based on the norms, while validation is a mainstay of the perceived customer's satisfaction.
Multiple Process Models	The multiple process model state that there are several standards or comparative processes that customer use to determine the perceived satisfaction
Attribution Models	The post-purchase behavior of a customer is informed by some key attributes which are derived from the purchase decision making. The customer often uses multidimensional schemes to analyze primary causes of success or failures
Affective Models	Effective feedback from consumers after the purchase of a product is an integral part of customer satisfaction. The responses entail both positive and negative emotions in the form of W-O-M behavior, complaints, and judgment which reflect their satisfaction
Equity Models	Customers' expenses and rewards anticipations amid a transaction derives equity interpretations. The interpretations determine the level of customer satisfaction.

Advantages

A satisfied customer has a higher likelihood of demonstrating loyalty, which can lead to higher brand trust and brand power (Gogoi, 2020). Brand power can be defined as "the ability of a brand to attract a share of its particular market" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Nobar and Rostamzadeh (2018) suggest a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and brand power. Recent findings suggest that brand trust is a deal-breaker or a determinant in 81% of customers' purchasing decisions. It should be noted, however, that customers trust only 34% of the brands they use or buy (Edelman, 2021). Concrete communication influences customer perception, builds trust, and enables managers to provide a straightforward solution for improving customer satisfaction (Packard and Berger, 2020).

In the marketing realm, W-O-M (Word-of-Mouth) communication is an effective method of promotion. Although negative feedback is significantly more likely to be shared than positive feedback, W-O-M communication, overall, benefits firms (Hilton et al., 2020). Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a company to their friends and family, increasing company exposure. Consumers who receive exceptional service may increase their purchases by 17% (Hilton et al., 2020). Customers demonstrate loyalty to a company through repeat purchases and positive W-O-M communication (Mattila, 2001). In sum, customer satisfaction positively correlates with many desired marketing outcomes, such as loyalty, brand power, brand trust, positive W-O-M communication, and repeat purchases.

Limitations

However, while customer satisfaction is an effective tool for marketing, it also has several limitations. Customer satisfaction may not be a direct indicator of a product or firm's value or quality, as it is driven by expectations (Rust and Zahorik, 1993). In some instances, customers become satisfied because their expectations of the company are low (Nobar and Rostamzadeh, 2018); existing customers may be similarly satisfied if the value they receive consistently meets their expectations (Wolter et al., 2019). Engaging customers play an important role in forming perceptions of quality and value; however, they may be overlooked by traditional approaches of customer satisfaction. Finally, high customer satisfaction may not always equate to higher profitability, especially if the company over-delivers the value provided (Chung et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2020).

Due to the indirect relationship between loyalty and satisfaction (Schirmer et al., 2018), it is feasible that other constructs can directly impact customer loyalty development. In addition to customer loyalty, some constructs may invoke more desired marketing outcomes, such as customer success, profitability, likability, and W-O-M communication (Huang and Trusov, 2020). Some more important limitations of the construct of customer satisfaction are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Limitations of Customer Satisfaction

	Author	Findings	Limitations
1	Rust & Zahorik (1993)	Customer satisfaction is linked to several factors which are linked to customers. These factors include loyalty, retention rate of clients, and change in customers' satisfaction which can be measured.	Delivered value compared to expected value is measured. Satisfaction of the customer does not represent the quality of the organization's offerings.
2	Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018)	Customers' experiences highlight the quality of services they receive which helps them meet their expectations. The brand is then positively impacted by positive customer feedback.	The high level of customer satisfaction demonstrates low expectations of the organization.
3	Lim, Tuli & Grewal (2020)	COS (cost of selling) is negatively affected by customer satisfaction. High capital and leveraged companies are more likely to suffer negative COS effects. Companies with diversified operations can also experience this effect.	Customers' level of satisfaction may not directly translate into profits.
3a	Chung, Ko, Joung & Kim (2020)	Organizations can improve their customer connections, satisfaction, and experiences using digital contexts.	There is little knowledge of the constructs that connect customer satisfaction and the profits of the organization.

4	Wolter, Bock, Mackey, Xu, & Smith (2019)	The satisfaction pathways of the employee have an influence on customer patronage, which was intended for frequent customers.	Clients will adapt to the value being offered, which will result in average satisfaction.
5	Gogoi (2020)	Customer loyalty is influenced by the level of satisfaction. This helps customers get a good experience.	Participation in research surveys is more likely to occur among customers who are more engaged with a company's activities. This leads to an overestimation of customer satisfaction.
6	Huang & Trusov (2020)	Financial performance can be assessed by using shareholder returns to reward executives, which can lead to a long-term plan that appreciates customers.	There are other measures better than customer satisfaction to analyze factors such as loyalty and likeability.
7	Miranda, Tavares & Queiró (2018)	There are three combinations that showcase the levels of quality of customer satisfaction. These dimensions are specific to other industries such as railways and comfort.	Customer satisfaction may have a different relationship with customer loyalty depending on the scenario.

8	Schirmer, Ringle, Gudergan, & Feistel (2018)	The impact of satisfaction is mediated by customers with high education who are committed and loyal. Satisfaction was partially mediated for customers with less education.	Other factors have an impact on loyalty's connection with satisfaction because of the unexplained connection between satisfaction and loyalty.
9	Takeuchi & Quelch (1983)	Regular contact with customers to provide them with unique information and collect opinions on product developments can enhance the satisfaction of existing customers and increase the chances of attracting new customers.	It is unclear whether a high satisfaction rating is based on value or a cordial relationship with the company.
10	Jones & and Sasser (1995)	High scores from customer satisfaction surveys are a clear indication of the health of a business enterprise. In addition, the results indicate that a drop in total satisfaction scores leads to a drop in customer loyalty.	Although the results of customer satisfaction surveys are a significant determinant of an organization's health, over-reliance on them can limit an organization's ability to fend off new competitors and improve the product-innovation process.
11	Andrlic, Budic, & Pismis (2013)	According to research, customer satisfaction is the backbone of a firm's survival in the long run. Moreover, retaining existing customers is more profitable compared to attracting potential buyers.	Changing customer expectations may inhibit an organization's efforts to achieve high satisfaction scores in the long run.

12	Anderson, Claes, & Lehmann (1994)	Based on the results, quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction, resulting in improved profitability. Furthermore, the quality of an organization's products is also influenced by the market's expectations.	High customer satisfaction levels may not automatically result in increased profitability because firms can over-deliver increased quality and customer value.
13	Kolodny (2018)	After-sale services such as repairs are linked to customer satisfaction and increase customer loyalty.	High levels of customer satisfaction may be an indication of customers' level of knowledge, experience, and low expectations of the organization.
14	Reichheld (2022)	The strategy of establishing loyal relationships with customers results in cost savings since it is relatively cheaper to serve an existing customer compared to the cost of a new customer.	There are better measures of enhancing cost savings other than creating loyalty relationships with customers through customer satisfaction.
15	Szyndlar (2021)	Customer centricity is a crucial approach in every organization that wants to achieve and maintain high levels of satisfaction. Customer satisfaction enhances loyalty and is a measure of business performance.	High customer satisfaction levels may not necessarily lead to increased profitability of the firm.

16 Fripp (2022)	Most organizations strive to promote their customer satisfaction scores because it is a crucial marketing metric.	Over-reliance on the customer satisfaction metric is subject to a wide range of limitations. For instance, high customer satisfaction scores may be an indication of low expectations of the organization and average satisfaction.
17 Riani, Torti, & Sergio Zani (2012)	It is important to use multiple variables when conducting customer satisfaction surveys to detect and eliminate atypical observations.	It is challenging to exhaust all variables that can be considered in measuring customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is hard to avoid atypical observations.

Customer Delight

Customer delight, a widely used tool to achieve a variety of desired marketing outcomes, has been defined as a "profoundly positive emotional state generally resulting from having one's expectations exceeded" (Oliver et al., 1997, p. 329) and as an "extreme form of satisfaction" (Barnes and Krallman, 2019). The process of delight creation frequently entails three characteristics: experiencing positive feelings, engaging with others, and successfully solving problems (Parasuraman et al., 2020). Customer delight introduces self-indulgence to the customer through senses, fantasies, and emotions. Delight can be created through positive emotions, such as joy, love, thrill, wonder, exhilaration, pride, gratitude, and surprise (Erevelles and Nobuyuki, 2013; Ball and Barnes, 2017). Ten foundational positive emotions have been incorporated into the academic literature: "happ[iness], pride, gratitude, interest,

challenge/determination, hope, affection, compassion, awe, and tranquility" (Ball and Barnes, 2017).

There is cohesion across research contexts regarding customer delight. An examination of customer delight in various environments such as domestic, international, offline, high/low employee involvement, and self-service suggests that customer delight typically has a positive impact on the customer (Barnes and Krallman, 2019). Delighted customers also demonstrate a higher degree of commitment than those who are just satisfied with a product or service (Wolter et al., 2019). Utilizing customer delight can help companies identify their impact on customer loyalty (e.g., whether customers will make repeat purchases or recommend companies) (Elias-Almeida et al., 2016). The effort may be worthwhile if it achieves desired marketing outcomes and is memorable for the customer (Rust and Oliver, 2000).

Table 3: Advantages of Customer Delight

	Author	Sample	Advantages
1	Barnes & Krallman (2019)	Four samples: Defining customer delight, understanding how it differs from customer satisfaction, identifying the most important factors contributing to customer delight, and discussing customer delight outcomes are considered	<p>The customer and their intentions are positively impacted.</p> <p>The research results demonstrate consistent customer delight.</p> <p>Researchers evaluated customer delight in multiple contexts as part of this cross-disciplinary research.</p>
2	Barnes, Collier, Howe, & Hoffman (2016)	For the survey, 242 respondents were recruited.	In the case of delighted customers, their customer loyalty, commitment, patronage, and recommendation levels were significantly higher than satisfied customers.
3	Ball & Barnes (2017)	The sample consisted of 385 respondents.	<p>Customers are delighted by hedonic encounters due to their multisensory, emotional, and fantasy elements.</p> <p>Delight can also be influenced by gratitude and joy.</p>

4	Torres & Kline (2013)	The hotels received a total of 119 letters from customers expressing delight with their recent stay.	<p>One factor that contributes to customer delight might be surprise.</p> <p>First, surprise triggers emotional arousal, which may have a positive effect on customer delight.</p>
5	Elias-Almeida, Miranda, and Almeida (2016)	The study utilized 427 responses retrieved between October 2010 and January 2011 after removing incomplete samples.	<p>Customer delight invokes a higher level of customer commitment than just satisfying the customer.</p> <p>Customer delight is measured by customer recommendations and repeat purchases.</p>
6	Barnes, Collier, and Robinson (2014)	There were a total of 252 respondents working on the front line of customer service to answer the survey.	<p>Frontline employees' attitudes and behavior are positively affected when they deal with delighted customers.</p> <p>Customer delight can be achieved through a variety of cognitive and affective routes, but the majority of the factors affecting the experience are related to customer-frontline interaction.</p>

7	Oliver, Rust, and Varki (1997)	A total of 19 and 20 items for each of the four factors of customer delight.	The author notes that quality consumer delight is an essential aspect of consumer satisfaction. It is significant to distinguish and focus on what is not expected and unknown
8	Finn (2012)	The total number of online retail stores is twenty.	Consumer delight is found to have a positive and linear impact in contrast to the zone of delight.
9	Parasuraman, Ball, Aksoy, Keiningham, and Zaki (2020)	Four methods were used to study 249 consumers (consumption diaries, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a qualitative survey).	Creating delight requires addressing three properties simultaneously-most commonly the presence of positive problem-solving.
10	Christ-Brendemühl and Schaarschmidt (2020)	The study uses twelve retail which are randomly selected from about 1588 retail stores listed on Canadian websites	Customer delight appears to be a result of comparison processes, including affective elements such as surprise, excitement, and joy.
11	Dutta, Guha, Biswas, and Grewal (2019)	The list is retrieved from eight randomly selected websites from 20 reputable websites in Canada	Following an unexpected satisfaction, customers feel a heightened sense of delight.
12	Gyung Kim and Mattila (2013)	The study involved a total of 435 participants.	Because surprises can be highly arousing, the delight of customers will be enhanced by service establishments that provide certain types of surprises.

13	Rust and Oliver (2000)	Four distinct methods were used to study 249 consumers (an in-depth questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, and a qualitative survey were used to collect data about customer consumption).	The effort may be worthwhile if the customer is delighted or if the memory remains.
14	Schlossberg (1990)	73 full-service restaurants utilizing frontline service technology serve 373 corresponding customers across 147 FLEs (Foreign Language in the Elementary School)	Customer delight refers to a higher level than customer satisfaction.
15	Bartl, Gouthier, and Lenker (2013)	The study majors in a sample of 120 business students who comprise 42.5% female students from a reputable public university	Customers are more likely to behave positively when they are delighted. As a result of experiencing delight, consumers act more loyally and show more intention to purchase.

Advantages

Customers who experienced delight achieved desired marketing outcomes such as loyalty and purchase intentions (Bartl et al., 2013), and people who were surveyed said they were more loyal, committed, patronizing, and willing to pay than those who were dissatisfied (Barnes et al., 2016). While customer delight is meant to provide customers with an above-average positive experience, it also has limitations. A company's ability to delight customers cannot be attributed to only one factor (Parasuraman et al., 2020). Because most researchers have considered one variable as the vital outcome (repurchase intentions), more outcomes need to be examined. Few studies have evaluated the role of mediators and moderators in the relationship

between customer delight and marketing outcomes (Barnes and Krallman, 2019); typically, customers' experience with the company is the most commonly measured moderator.

Limitations

Researchers have previously examined employees' perceptions of customer delight without looking at the factors that might have caused it. There is a need for research related to the stimuli for arousal, particularly arousal related to positive affect (Oliver et al., 1997). Longitudinal/experimental data, which has not been conducted within the customer delight literature (Ball and Barnes, 2017), would provide a stronger case for causation. A single company selected for high and low contexts would provide a stronger argument for validity (Barnes et al., 2014), as would considering perceived service quality on the supply side and customer delight on the demand side (Elias-Almeida et al., 2016). Reliable predictions can be made once systematic empirical research has been conducted in suitable conditions (e.g., product warranty, service guarantee), which can indicate effective execution (Dutta et al., 2019).

Developing quality-improvement systems that incorporate customer delight requires additional efforts (Oliver et al., 1997). Because of the shift in the economy, companies will increasingly be expected to create delight without employee presence. There is insufficient evidence to support the competitive effects of customer delight (Rust and Oliver, 2000) and limited evidence to support whether emotion has a long-lasting impact on behavioral intentions (Bartl et al., 2013). A deeper understanding of the theoretical basis of delight would expand the construct's definition (Barnes and Krallman, 2019) and create a theoretical foundation for customer success.

Table 4: Limitations of Customer Delight

	Author	Findings	Limitations
1	Barnes and Krallman (2019)	<p>Customer delight can be caused by employee-customer interactions.</p> <p>It is possible for customer delight to link different facets of the firm together.</p>	<p>There has been a focus on one variable (repurchase intentions) in most delight studies; there must be examination of additional outcomes.</p> <p>In B2B (Business to Business) market scenarios, little to no research has been conducted to evaluate customer delight.</p> <p>Theories about customer delight need to be investigated further.</p> <p>The moderation and mediation of customer delight can be difficult to understand without research that identifies moderators and mediators.</p>
2	Barnes, Collier, Howe, and Hoffman (2016)	<p>Joy and delight have a stronger relationship with high-frequency customers.</p> <p>The combination of joy and tangible aspects may lead to both joy and delight, while knowledge may result in only joy.</p>	<p>There is limited focus on three management variables to represent key components of service quality.</p> <p>The limited relationship between expertise and surprise.</p>

3	Ball and Barnes (2017)	Customer delight is positively impacted by a psychological sense of brand community (PSBC) and transcendent customer experiences (TCE).	It would be possible to prove causality for the relationships between affect and experience if there was longitudinal or experimental data.
4	Torres and Kline (2013)	<p>Guests frequently cited being taken care of, having a friendly staff, going above and beyond the call of duty, and resolving problems.</p> <p>Depending on the culture of an organization, different types of delight may be experienced.</p>	<p>A larger study is needed to test the generalizability of the results.</p> <p>Research is still relatively new, and more exploration is in the hotel industry.</p> <p>Future research should be specific to the industry to improve profitability and guest experience by understanding customer delight.</p>
5	Elias-Almeida, Miranda, and Almeida (2016)	The effect of customer satisfaction on customer delight is similar to the effect of customer delight on customer loyalty.	It is necessary to conduct further research on customer delight and perceptions of service quality from both supply and demand sides.
6	Barnes, Collier, and Robinson (2014)	<p>Customer perceptions affect employee engagement at work.</p> <p>The relationship between employee and customer emotions is impacted by customer service-based role conflict.</p>	Choosing one firm for both high and low contexts would strengthen the validity argument.

7	Oliver, Rust, and Varki (1997)	<p>For consumer emotions to be evoked, consumer involvement must be adequate.</p> <p>There must be a wide range of exceedingly pleasing qualities in the product/service; that is, the performance must be unexpected, either because it occurs very rarely or because the consumer did not anticipate it.</p>	<p>Quality improvement systems need to take delight into account.</p> <p>It is important to understand the triggers associated with positive emotions.</p>
8	Finn (2012)	<p>Customer delight and customer satisfaction are responses to a customer's experience.</p> <p>Behavioral intentions are positively affected by customer delight quadratically.</p> <p>When the level of delight is already high, an increase has a greater impact than when delight is average or lower.</p>	<p>The respondents visited websites, and their satisfaction was measured based on their interactions.</p> <p>In the research, subsequent behaviors were not analyzed, such as frequent visits and repeat purchases.</p>
9	Parasuraman, Ball, Aksoy, Keiningham, and Zaki (2020)	<p>As well as extreme satisfaction, joy, and surprise, customer delight encompasses six other qualities that stand alone or together.</p>	<p>No single quality can be attributed to delight.</p>

10	Christ-Brendemühl and Schaarschmidt (2020)	The emotional response of customers during their interactions shows that delight is more important for online recommendation intentions than mere satisfaction.	The study was limited to a single service industry as the focus due to the intense time commitment required to collect data by visiting firms.
11	Dutta, Guha, Biswas, and Grewal (2019)	Customers will be delighted when they receive a surprise refund, but only if countervailing cognitions do not obstruct or suppress those effects.	Studies focused on signal defaults and what follows them, or in more by expectations, remain limited until systematic empirical studies are conducted.
12	Gyung Kim and Mattila (2013)	Explanations help to prevent unrealistic expectations from being raised and enhance customer satisfaction.	Hypothetical scenarios and a single test for each situation can be helpful.
13	Rust and Oliver (2000)	It is likely that delight programs can be profitable if customer satisfaction levels are maintained at the higher levels caused by adjusted levels of delight.	There is a lack of competitive effects research on customer delight.
14	Schlossberg (1990)	The goal of firms should be to delight their customers.	Not applicable to all industries, limited to the automobile industry.

15	Bartl, Gouthier, and Lenker (2013)	<p>Both surprise and delight were influenced most by usefulness, illustrating its importance as a crucial requirement in increasing the likelihood of a website delighting consumers.</p> <p>Both studies indicate that a positive link between delight and purchase intentions can increase customers' likelihood to purchase even before they interact with a product or service.</p>	<p>Neither the research nor its findings address the long-term impact of emotion on behavior.</p> <p>For retailing websites, removing quality measurements could also affect customer delight.</p>
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Customer Success

Customer success could be a potential tool to overcome the limitations of customer satisfaction and customer delight. Embryonic applications of customer success were conducted by practitioners in the mid-1990s. Robert Nardelli, CEO of GE Power Systems, was one such experimenter. According to Peters (2003), despite GE Power Systems being an “old economy” business, it was GE’s most profitable division, more profitable than GE's medical devices or aircraft engine divisions (p.89). Indeed, Jack Welch, former legendary CEO of GE, was effusive in his praise for Nardelli: “The numbers he was delivering were the best I had seen in my 40 years at the company and could well be the best operating performance of any business in GE history” (Welch and Byrne, 2001, p. 413).

At the time, Six Sigma was a common business strategy, but it was unclear that it provided any substantial differentiating advantage. Even Nardelli noted, "We are becoming better at Six Sigma every day. However, we must consider the customer's profitability. Is what we offer helping our client's bottom lines?" (Brown et al., 2011, p. 345). Nardelli proceeded to provide customers with an objective, mathematical measure of success. If the customer’s desired success outcome was profitability, Nardelli focused on that outcome and essentially guaranteed it. If customers did not achieve their desired measurable outcomes, Nardelli compensated them for failing to do so (Peters, 2003, p.89). Offering substantially more than simple customer satisfaction resulted in a proposition that was very difficult for customers to refuse. This construct of customer success was so effective that it resulted in GE Power Systems becoming GE’s most profitable division.

At approximately the same time, John Luongo and Marie Alexander of Vantive Corporation started to apply concepts of customer success in their software company, with the

goal of providing customers consistent care through a variety of channels, such as the call center, the Internet, and in-person service. Alexander established a “customer success team” to monitor and assure customer success when utilizing Vantive’s software (Customer Success Association, 2021b). The team established a six-month evaluation period during which they asked customers what their desired success outcomes were, and customers participated in a post-evaluation review to gauge if their desired outcomes had been met (Customer Success Association, 2021b). If the desired outcome of profitability had been met, the customer success team would be rewarded. If not, the process would cycle for the next six months until customers’ desired outcomes were met. This process was so successful that Alexander received “an overwhelmingly positive response” from customers (My Customer Newsdesk, 2009). Vantive’s success was also represented through exponential revenue growth: “\$39m in 1995, \$64m in 1996, and a forecast of \$110m in 1997” (CBR Staff Writer, 2016), convincingly establishing that by focusing on customer success outcomes (e.g., revenue), Vantive was able to achieve its own desired success outcomes. From a practitioner standpoint, customer success is defined as “a long-term, scientifically engineered, and professionally directed business strategy for maximizing customer and company sustainable proven profitability” (Customer Success Association, 2021a).

Perhaps the most widely used application of customer success today is the Software as a Service (SaaS) model. A prototypical example is Salesforce.com, a company that has achieved unprecedented success using this model (Trefis Team and Great Speculations, 2021). With SaaS, firms provide software to customers for free. The software is managed by the provider (e.g., Salesforce.com), who tracks customers’ usage (Chai and Casey, 2021) and obtains detailed knowledge of the customer’s profitability and other indicators of success (e.g., revenue). As customer success increases, the provider starts charging customers a percentage of that

measurable success. In other words, the provider's ("What is SAAS," n.d.) success is directly driven by its customer's success. The CEO of Salesforce.com, Mark Benioff, succinctly summarizes the main focus of the company: "how do we make our customers more successful than ever" (Evans, 2017). The SaaS model convincingly demonstrates that the construct of customer success is a powerful one.

Previous academic conceptualizations of customer success differ from how the construct was initially developed by Nardelli and other early pioneers of customer success. There appear to be some construct specificity issues when compared to Nardelli's original construct of customer success (Peters, 2003). At least two key academic articles specifically focus on the management of customer success and describe customer success through the lens of customer relationship management. We suggest that the construct is more precise and should be defined accordingly.

For example, according to Hochstein et al. (2020), customer success management (CSM) is "the proactive (versus reactive) relational engagement of customers to ensure the value potential of product offerings is realized by the customer" (p.3). Theoretically, they discuss customer success management through the modularity theory, which describes how separate, specialized roles can help customers better identify and interact with one Customer Success Manager throughout the company ("e.g., with sales to renew their contract") (Hochstein et al., 2020, p.4). They suggest "CSM as an advocate for the customer within the vendor firm... [with focus on] ...the customer's journey... Efforts are defined (not duplicated), information is shared (not siloed), customer experience is focused (not fragmented), and customers enjoy an ongoing single point of contact (not many)" (Hochstein et al., 2020, p.4). While their work is commendable and forward-looking, they focus on the strategies to effectively implement

customer success management into an organization rather than on the construct and theoretical basis of customer success itself.

After Hochstein et al. (2020) published their article, Hilton et al. (2020) combined the definition of CSM from the Hochstein et al. article and the definition of CSM by Porter and Heppelmann (2015) to define CSM as "proactively prioritizing customers' experience and engagement towards maximum value-in-use." (Hochstein et al., 2020; Porter and Heppelmann, 2015 as cited by Hilton et al., 2020, p. 366). According to Hilton et al. (2020), customer success management enhances both the firm and customer's performance. Hilton et al. (2020) analyzed some foundational research streams for academics to follow, such as goal, learning, and stakeholder management. Although their motivation encourages academic researchers to further expand CSM either through practice or theory, our motivation stems even further than that. Our goal is to examine and theoretically expand customer success as a specific construct and in-depth.

Conceptual Definition and Illustrative Examples

This study defines customer success as an objective and mathematically based strategic process to maximize customer-desired outcomes. A long-term customer success strategy is customer-driven and designed to be mutually beneficial to an organization and its customers. Customer success could help an organization interact more effectively with its customers. Key attributes of customer success include: (i) It is co-created with the customer (vs. delivered by the firm); (ii) It is customer-focused (vs. product-focused); (iii) It is objectively measured and mathematical (vs. subjectively measured); (iv) It is targeted to the individual customer (vs. mass-marketed) and (v) Its causality with marketing outcomes is stronger. While the construct of

customer success is not designed to replace the constructs of customer satisfaction or customer delight, it could be a superior tool for building customer equity in certain contexts, situations, or industries.

A firm uses customer success to better understand and provide services that cater to customers' needs and desires. A company can achieve customer success by (i) identifying what the customer perceives success to be, (ii) determining how to objectively quantify customer success, and (iii) using its customer success measures against those of competitors.

Consider a B2C market involving a university MBA program whose customers are its students. Most MBA programs use a customer satisfaction survey at the end of each course and at the end of the program that measures if teaching quality, subject matter covered, student support, and so on has met or exceeded students' expectations. Such measures, at best, indirectly indicate if students can achieve their desired post-program objectives, such as a higher starting salary, increase in salary from pre-MBA program levels, or other similar metrics. At worst, these measures might have no correlation whatsoever with these desired outcomes. To better objectively indicate if desired customer outcomes have been achieved, customer success could be a more meaningful measure than customer satisfaction in this scenario. Other metrics of customer success for MBA students could be the ratio of starting salary to student debt, net worth, tenure after graduation, and non-financial desired outcomes.

For a B2B scenario, consider a company that makes electric generators like GE Power Systems, whose customer is a local utility company like Duke Power. Let us further assume the customer-desired outcome is profitability. The provider can use customer satisfaction as a measure to determine the quality of its relationship with its customer. However, the customer's

satisfaction with the generator or the service provided does not necessarily indicate that the customer has achieved their desired outcomes. Thus, customer satisfaction may, at best, be an indirect measure of the customer's desired outcome or, at worst, be meaningless. On the other hand, directly measuring customer success through a metric such as profits produced per generator may be a more objective and meaningful measure of desired outcomes. The provider could then compare this objective measure with the profits produced per generator of a competitor, like Siemens (Peters, 2003), and could further guarantee that the customer will achieve its desired levels of profitability by reimbursing the difference if the customer does not reach the desired level. This powerful marketing tool would result in a sustainable competitive advantage for the provider, which could design a long-term strategy around customer success, so that customer profitability rose year after year as well as its own profitability. The relationship between provider and customer is built on a durable foundation of objectivity that is difficult to damage.

In a G2C scenario, a country's success can be calculated through its response to a pandemic, such as COVID-19. Once a pandemic outbreak occurs, the government has a responsibility to protect its citizens and provide solutions to combat the problem. A construct such as customer satisfaction might be an indirect indicator of citizens' desired outcomes. Factors that can increase customer success during a pandemic include vaccination, masks, political affiliation, race, gender, income, and age. By measuring customer success, countries could achieve objective customer-desired outcomes, such as low death rate, low infection rate, and low case rate. Thus, customer success is a more valuable tool that can help in the fight against current and future pandemics.

CHAPTER 3: INDIGENOUS THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Overview

As this is likely the first time the construct of customer success has been theoretically defined and discussed, the first section focuses on creating an initial theoretical foundation for this relatively new construct. The second section examines how the construct of customer success empirically affects businesses and marketing. To accomplish our goals in the first section, we use a methodology comprised of foundational premises pioneered by Hunt (2015, 2020), who uses the inductive realist (IR) approach (Hunt, 2020). The IR model of theory generation influences theory building through scientific discovery accompanied by justifications, creating the idea that developing a new theory starts with recognizing existing theory limitations. Scholars must be aware of the current state of knowledge to discover certain limitations (Hunt, 2020). In addition, Vargo and Lusch's methodological approach will be used as a model for the theory development in this dissertation. For instance, Vargo and Lusch's service-centered dominant logic implies a paradigm shift in perspective from the traditional good-centered view. The service-dominant logic provides an insightful theoretical framework foundation to follow. (According to Zeithaml's (2020) recent analysis (see appendix), two methodologies to develop theoretical frameworks in marketing have been instrumental in producing outstanding research impact.)

To accomplish our goals in the second section, we use an empirical methodology to analyze the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through the government-to-consumer (G2C) market. We will examine the methods that the United States government uses in response to the pandemic to help its citizens. Then, we will analyze the results and determine if our hypotheses are supported.

Theoretical Foundations

I draw from the Reverse Logic Framework of relationship marketing as my theoretical foundation, with the Customer Valuation Model and Return on Relationships as supporting theories for this research.

Reverse Logic Framework

A business's outcomes, outputs, actions, and inputs can be determined using reverse logic. The reverse logic framework (RLF) of relationship marketing fosters business growth since it focuses on customer needs; hence, the business can be created to meet those needs. The RLF ensures that relationship marketing (from the customers to the business) is based on a clear understanding of customers' preferences (Kumar et al., 2009). The CLV (customer lifetime value) metric, whose concept and ideas underpin the reverse logic architecture, is the starting point for all subsequent customer relationship management decisions under the new paradigm (Kumar et al., 2009).

Customer Valuation Model

Customer valuation theory is represented by a data-driven customer valuation model (CVM), in which consumer benefits are quantified monetarily; that is, it represents the monetary value of what a firm does or could do for its customers. Customer value models are mainly used in B2B markets where the quantity of customer value provided is essential. The CVM, which usually covers marketing and promotion charges, database design and development costs, and customer support costs, can help frame and clarify a business's products' features and focus on capabilities, thus leading to effective relationship marketing. It shifts the focus from elements and punishments to challenges, benefits, and value in the customer-supplier product interaction (Kumar, 2008).

Return on Relationships

Return on relationships (ROR) can be defined as "the value accrued by a person or a brand due to establishment, maintenance and nurturing a relationship" (Gummesson, 2004, p.141, 257). An important factor in establishing customer experience is coordinating the relationship between buyer and seller, ranging from transactional to relational (Witell et al., 2020). Relational business engagements are viewed as win-win, whereby both suppliers and customers are expected to strive to maintain their relationship (Grönroos and Helle, 2012). Changes in a company's balance in quality, productivity, and profitability can improve its ROR, affecting revenue, cost, and capital outcomes. Downsizing companies can reduce expenses and capital employed, resulting in increased profits (Gummesson, 2004). In addition, the cost structure can be adjusted, and capital can be utilized more effectively to increase revenue. Although reducing revenues may generate cost savings, transforming unprofitable customers into profitable ones may be more effective.

The RLF, which allows a business to measure its customers' scope of consumption and provide goods and services per customer demands, is a relatively better metric for selecting and managing customers to maximize revenues. Relationship marketing, as pursued through the RLF, puts consumers first by creating unique customer experiences to build strong customer relationships. The CVM helps ensure customer success by improving the product features and functionalities determined by customers as most important to them (Kumar, 2008). Traditionally, the CVM focuses on how a company can benefit its customers. I have restructured the CVM to adapt to the construct of customer success and show how the customer can benefit the company.

Theory Development Methodology

We can view the initial theory development from the indigenous form, the IR (inductive realist) approach, which maintains that a proper development begins by acknowledging the limitations within the existing theories. This clarifies how we established the current knowledge and how we can build upon it (Hunt, 2015). The IR model has seven fundamental steps in the research domains, including:

i) Identify the current problem, ii) Identify the problem-causing factors and how to address them effectively. iii) Classify the elements of other theories that are yet to be used and can address the current problem. iv) Use the information from the first three steps to develop initial foundational premises that explain the current problem, describe existing elements of the problem, and potentially provide relatively new theories that could solve the problem. v) To update the foundational premises, assess the initial premises and their limitations. vi) In publications, describe the subsequent foundational assumptions, describe the contributing aspects, and create new theories that could assist in solving the problem more effectively. vii) In future publications, regularly update the foundational premises as new constraints are discovered.

The R-A (resource advantage) theory applied by Hunt (2000) is an example of the IR approach. It was created upon different opinions as follows; i) heterogeneous needs in a specific industry, occurring between industries with dynamic characteristics, ii) information received from customers incomplete) Fulfilling needs of the human motivation, iii) organizational goals expecting maximum advantage, iv) Resources that are possessed by organizations composed of physical, financial, legal, information human, v) Resources in unstable movement and are

unique, vi) Managers involved in creating, comprehending, acknowledging, selecting and implementing and redesigning the new strategies, and vii) Innovation of the dynamic competition internally. Hunt determined that competition requires proper structure and foundation, and he developed a foundational premise (Hunt, 2015). We use this methodology to propose steps, create an initial theoretical foundation for customer success, and identify the limitations of the current problem.

This initial theoretical foundation seeks to explain customer success by incorporating ideas proposed by Hunt (2015) through strategic marketing theory. The practicality of Hunt's (2020) ideas will be identified by focusing on scientific realism, truth, and qualitative methods in experimental and research tests. We will then apply the theory to demonstrate its practicality in actual scenarios for practitioners and academics. Using this research to understand better customer success could lead to further research in marketing theory, competition, ethics, philosophy of science, and Macromarketing. We will fulfill customer success by prioritizing their demands and growing the business. We seek to create a publication to address the current problems of customer success based on Hunt's (2020) IR approach and update the foundational premises.

Indigenous theory development involves the development of an original theory specific to a problem or field. Using a theory in several fields means that the theory is not indigenous; to some, this undermines the ability to solve problems in that field. Hunt (2015, 2020) aims to solve a significant problem that many ignore, including professionals in the area. According to Hunt, marketing lacks indigenous theories to explain concepts or resolve issues (2020). Therefore, the marketing field borrows theories from other areas that don't fully satisfy its goals. Hunt (2020)

aims to provide research and supported procedures and systems that we can use to develop indigenous marketing theories. The process uses the service-dominant approach, which is limited because it does not utilize algorithms essential for effective modern-day theories.

As the IR approach deals with hypothesis arrangement, native hypothesis advancement should undoubtedly start with the fundamental premises procedure, which should begin with a distinct marketing challenge. Rather than endeavoring to make a hypothesis or model for resolving the issue promptly, the examination concentrates on aspects that foster the essential premises of a structure that succinctly explains the problem: Straightforwardly describes parts of the case and conceivably prompts the advancement of a model or models that add to the issue's goal (Hunt, 2015). This approach allows us to create a theory or model unique to a specific field, such as marketing. We can utilize an indigenous theory to create other theories that explain and solve related problems in the same area.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) applied a methodology similar to Hunt's to design a dominant logic that focuses more on the provision of services than on the exchange of goods. A dominant logic suggests that marketing is a persistent social and monetary movement where operant assets are essential. The methodology indicates that monetary results are a test of a market theory and not an eventual result. The commercial center can facilitate firms' ability to incorporate knowledge into their activities, create better ways to serve their clients, and enhance their financial position by exposing assumptions about the market (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

Furthermore, Vargo and Lusch (2004) focused on both the service-centered view and the goods-centered view for further research in the field. The good-centered view includes five premises: i) the act of producing or distributing goods and services constitutes as economic

activity. ii) to be successful, these goods must provide superior value to their competitors during the production and distribution process. iii) each decision variable should be set at a level necessary to maximize profits from the sale of output. iv) standardization and production of the market will ensure maximum control and efficiency; v) high demand products can be stored and later sold to consumers at a profit.

The service-centered view comprises four steps; i) develop or establish an economic entity's basic competencies, knowledge, and skills that will provide a potential competitive advantage. ii) determine the potential customers that could take advantage of these capabilities, iii) deliver value propositions based on customized, competitive relationships to meet specific customer needs. iv) Improving customer offerings and performance with financial data. In 2000, Hunt used a similar methodology to Vargo and Lusch in 2004. Vargo and Lusch's paper is the most cited paper in Marketing (Vargo, n.d.) and was written before Hunt's paper (2015). Hunt then used Vargo and Lusch's paper in his 2015, 2020 papers as a reference since it was so similar to his methodology. As there are overlaps in strategic marketing amongst Hunt's (2000, 2015, 2020) references, the methodology is a development produced by the focus of businesses on customer value.

An essential aspect of our theoretical methodology is that relationships are analyzed based on cause and effect. A process that might transform our approach toward a problem and rebuild our philosophy toward customer success-related issues. Methodologically, this process promotes a broader understanding of one relatively new and novel area of research. Ideally, the results will serve as a platform for further research and accelerate progress in marketing.

A proposition is an analytic generalization based on a carefully formulated theoretical statement, theory, or proposition. A generalization may take the form of a lesson learned, a hypothesis, or another principle that can be applied to other scenarios. There are four major principles of proposition building, and the first one is flexibility. A flexible proposition will make it easier for the theory to be manipulated and used in different cases. It needs to be an open proposition so that it is easy to critic and make the necessary adjustments to it. Openness will also make the proposition easier to be improved and developed further. The proposition should have a purpose (Äyväri and Jyrämä, 2017). Every theory developed has a specific purpose that it seeks to fulfill. Finally, a proposition needs to be simple. For the sake of the readers who are not in the associated field, the proposition needs to be as simple as possible. (Cornelissen, 2017). The simplicity of the proposition will help it to fulfill its purpose because it enhances clarity.

With the knowledge of the principles in place, the first step is to formulate the foundational premises. The next step is to define the problem to determine whether it is worthy of solving and investing time (Dimitriadis and Papista, 2010). Thereafter, one will define the problem they seek to solve as they carefully evaluate what would separate them from the other research being conducted in the same area (Azman Ng et al., 2019). After evaluation, one will have to measure the relevance of the theory in the field, and then they will apply it to use different engaging critics to verify the theory itself. This will help improve its efficiency.

Foundational Premises

FP 1: All purchase outcomes depend on the customer achieving self-defined success objectives.

All customer outcomes are a result of the customer's need to achieve success. Marketing involves the process of "...creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." (c.f., American Marketing Association definition, 2017). When making a purchase, consumers fundamentally pursue a successful target outcome. Such target outcomes may be driven by cognitive or affective underpinnings. For example, in a business-to-consumer (B2C) scenario, customers who purchase athletic shoes anticipate success at running or in reaching some other objective. In a business-to-business (B2B) scenario, customers of SaaS (software as a service) providers, such as Salesforce.com, do not pay the firm till they achieve success at some predetermined objective (e.g., sales, profitability). In a government-to-customer (G2C) scenario, taxpayers anticipate that their taxes will be used in a manner that would successfully protect them in a pandemic or from some other catastrophe.

Long-term customer-firm relationships fundamentally depend on the customer continuing to achieve these success objectives. Customer success objectives are defined by the customer and not by the firm. By ensuring that they precisely understand each of their customers' success objectives and how these success objectives continue to evolve over time, firms can build enduring relationships with their customers while at the same time ensuring that it would be difficult or impossible for customers to switch to potential current or yet-unborn competitors as long as they ensure that their customers keep achieving their success objectives. Thus, the

relationship between customer outcomes and constructs such as customer loyalty can potentially be made stronger and less tenuous than with the use of current CRM constructs, such as customer satisfaction and customer delight. Furthermore, by ensuring higher levels of success (e.g., sales, profitability) for its customers, firms can potentially achieve higher levels of success (e.g., sales, profitability) for themselves.

In sum,

- Customers essentially buy success (not the product)
- Success objectives are defined by the customer
- A firm needs to focus on delivering success (not the product)

FP 2: Customer success is always the outcome of co-created value.

Co-creation strategies associated with customer success replace firm-created strategies associated with current CRM constructs. Co-creation, defined as the “joint creation of value by the company and the customer...” (c.f., Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 8), refers to the process by which a company and its customers jointly create value. The focus is on the interests of the customer but results in enhancing the interests of all parties involved. Firms that co-create value with their customers are better positioned to identify customer needs and focus on prioritizing their most important perspectives (Vargo and Lusch, 2006) better. Moreover, customers are more engaged (Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2014), and better offerings and enhanced success objectives can continuously be developed. For example, when an MBA granting institution and students co-create a curriculum, the students’ “customer success” objectives, such as salary or promotion, may more likely be achieved.

Unlike traditional constructs, such as customer satisfaction and customer delight, where firms try to determine customer needs and then create offerings and strategies to fulfill those needs, the fundamental essence of customer success is that firms continuously engage customers in the co-creation of value. Such engagement enhances the probability that a firm is more cognizant of their customers' success objectives, is better able to continuously enhance customer success outcomes, and is better able to lock them in from the threat of new competition. Indeed, there is considerable evidence from GE Power Systems (Welch and Byrne, 2001) and Salesforce.com that co-created customer success strategies resulted in better success outcomes (as compared with the use of traditional constructs) not just for the customer but for the firm. At GE, for example, Welch and Byrne (2002, p.413) note that the outcomes being delivered were "the best I had seen in my 40 years at the company and could well be the best operating performance of any business in GE history."

In sum,

- Co-creation is the process by which a firm and its customers jointly create value
- All customer success is co-created
- Customers are always engaged with the firm; thus, co-created value is likely to be superior to firm-created value

FP3: Customer success is always customer-centric.

Customer centricity associated with customer success replaces offering (product) centricity associated with current CRM constructs. Customer centricity is defined as "a strategy that aligns a company's development/delivery of its products/services around the current and

future needs of a select set of customers in order to maximize their long-term financial value to the firm” (c.f., Fader, 2012, p. 39). The longer-term objectives of both the firm and the customer can better be achieved if a firm makes customer centricity a key foundation of its customer relationship strategy. This is in part because most firms are better able to help achieve the success objectives for certain groups of customers than for others. Thus, the achievement of customer success objectives is more likely to be mutually beneficial for both the firm and its customers. (Fader, 2012).

SaaS (software as service) business models, such as Salesforce.com, for example, make their software, infrastructure, and expertise freely available to most customers, large or small. However, their customers only pay the firm if they achieve their self-defined but mutually agreed on success objectives (e.g., sales or profitability). In other words, as their customers are better able to achieve their objectives (e.g., profitability), for example, the objectives (e.g., profitability) of the firm also increase. In a similar vein, Nardelli’s focus on General Electric can be summed up with his comment, “Is what we offer helping our client's bottom lines?” (Brown et al., 2011, p. 345). By focusing on answering this question, Nardelli was able to achieve a record bottom line for his own firm.

Typically, with traditional CRM constructs, such as customer satisfaction or customer delight, firms generally focus more on the product/service rather than on customer-defined success objectives. With a focus on customer centricity, customer success is likely to result in better customer and firm outcomes than firms that are product-centric (Shah et al., 2006). Current levels of hyper-competition may also increasingly suggest that product-centric approaches be replaced by customer-centric approaches. A product, service, or business model

can be replicated, but an unrelenting focus on customer success may preclude competition from entering the market. Thus, with a foundational focus on customer centricity, customer success approaches are more likely to enable a firm to build longer-term relationships with its customers than with traditional CRM approaches.

In sum,

- “A strategy that aligns a company’s development/delivery of its products/services around the current and future needs of a select set of customers in order to maximize their long-term financial value to the firm” (c.f., Fader, 2012, p. 39).
- Customer centricity ensures that the needs of each customer are unique and always the central focus of the firm
- The longer-term objectives of both the firm and the customer can better be achieved

FP4: Customer success always involves mass customization.

Mass customization strategies associated with customer success replace mass marketing strategies associated with current CRM constructs. Mass customization can be defined as the capacity “to offer individually tailored products or services on a large scale” (Zipkin, 2001, p. 2). It involves “...enough variety and customization that nearly everyone finds exactly what they want.” (Pine, 1993, p.115). By mass-customizing customer outcomes, customer success allows both firms and customers to be more focused on achieving their success objectives.

Through mass customization, customer success allows a firm and its customers to co-create a *uniquely designed* long-term upward success trajectory for both the firm and each of its

customers. Moreover, through mass customization, customer success allows firms to modify desired outcomes in conjunction with the customer as market conditions and competitive forces change. By designing different customer outcomes for different customers, mass customization creates stronger bonds and more fulfilling experiences between a firm and its customers. With mass customization, customer success outcomes are essentially created for *segments of one*. As existing CRM constructs involve mass marketing strategies, there are limitations to enduring relationships as competing firms with better prices, products, or promotions may entice the customer to switch loyalties. Thus, with mass customization, customer success may result in stronger and longer-term relationships between a firm and its individual customers.

In sum,

- The capacity “to offer individually tailored products or services on a large scale” (Zipkin, 2001, p. 2).
- Customer success through mass customization is likely to be superior to customer satisfaction through mass marketing as the needs of individual customers are better recognized
- Customer success outcomes are essentially created for segments of one

FP5: Customer success always involves absolute outcomes, not relative perceptions.

Objectively absolute mathematical metrics associated with customer success replace relatively subjective perceptions associated with current CRM constructs. Customer satisfaction and customer delight, two of the more commonly used CRM constructs, are relatively subjective perceptions from the perspective of both the firm and the customer. They depend on a number of

factors that can vary among products, competitors, time frames, or customers. Customer success, however, is an objective, mathematical construct and generally is comparable to similar outcomes across products, competitors, time frames, or customers. Consequently, customer success measures can reasonably be assumed to be more reliable indicators of longer-term customer equity than current CRM constructs. For example, customer success metrics such as profitability, goal achievement, or health-related outcomes are more objectively absolute than constructs such as customer satisfaction or customer delight that may be dependent on prior baselines or relative comparisons. They are more standardized and offer greater clarity and precision. Customers can thus more easily compare customer success outcomes across products, competitors, time frames, or markets. Thus, customer success metrics may enhance a customer's ability to make better choices and allows firms to better retain existing, desirable customers. Firms that more objectively measure success outcomes for their customers implicitly ensure that their own success outcomes are also more objectively achieved. In sum, as customer success is more clearly defined, standardized, and precise, it more readily can be applied in different situations than constructs like customer satisfaction and customer delight.

In sum,

- Customer success is a more objective, mathematical outcome as compared to customer satisfaction or delight, which are generally relative perceptions
- More clearly defined and precise
- More stable indicator of longer-term customer equity

FP6: Customer success is always a continuous journey (trajectory) involving the firm and the customer.

A continuous trajectory associated with customer success replaces discreet outcomes associated with current CRM constructs. Unlike customer satisfaction and customer delight, which generally are discreetly measured outcomes at various times, customer success is an ongoing, continuous journey involving the firm and its customers. Firms that embrace customer success are deeply involved with their customers' activities and success goals. Customers' success goals constantly evolve. The relationship between a firm and its customers "involves continuous bi-directional communication and interaction" (Shanmugasundaram, 2010). Current CRM constructs tend to focus on the transactional stage of a firm-customer relationship. However, customer success co-creates value continuously throughout all phases of a customer's lifecycle (Ghosh, 2022).

In sum,

- The customer is always looking for higher levels of success and will get it from a competitor if the firm does not constantly revise its trajectory
- Firms are deeply involved with their customers' activities and success goals
- Better than the discrete outcomes involved with customer satisfaction or delight

FP7: Value, always defined by the customer, drives customer success goals.

Value is defined as "the...benefits a customer [or] company receives in exchange for the price it pays for a market offering" (Anderson and Narus, 1998, para. 7). Identifying customer success is determined by the value offered to customers beyond a product sold by the company. Value is the influence created by customers, which can sustain meaningful and successful business relationships. A company creates value by establishing good customer practices and finding better ways of using a product.

By truly understanding their customers on a detailed level, firms can effectively determine what customers value the most and properly deliver that value by providing what the customer desires. Typically, with traditional CRM models, firms may be subject to guessing what represents value for the customer. Firms that focus on customer success may have a higher likelihood of ensuring value for the customer.

Evaluating customer success can help firms determine whether their customers are successfully utilizing their products and services and recognize possible red flags when customers are not making the desired progress. Customer success provides positive value to investments made by customers and companies that truly care for customers' progress in regard to their personal goals. Without including a positive value at the root of services offered to customers, customer success becomes a company's unfulfilled wish.

In sum,

- The customer, not the firm, defines customer success goals

FP8: Customer success is always proactive.

Proactive strategies associated with customer success replace reactive strategies associated with current CRM constructs. Customer success allows firms to address issues before they occur. Firms that utilize other current CRM constructs may react to customer issues as they come; however, it is not as efficient (Bhaskaran, 2014). Firms that can foresee issues and proactively contact their customers can enhance trust and loyalty within the customer-firm relationship.

In sum,

- Customer success allows firms to address issues before they occur
- Current CRM constructs are generally reactive
- Proactive strategies are generally superior to reactive strategies and help the firm and the customer keep ahead of constant change

FP9: An important goal of customer success is to minimize customer sacrifice

Customer sacrifice is defined as “the gap between what a customer settles for and what he wants exactly” (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p.78). Customer success strategies can minimize the customer sacrificing what they truly want from a product/service. Typically, current CRM constructs tend to involve strategies that design products/services for the average customer (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). As every customer is unique and not average, these strategies then lead to customer sacrifice. Through customer success, when customers are encouraged to achieve their desired goals, firms are then able to truly understand their customers’ desired outcomes.

In sum,

- Customer sacrifice is defined as “the gap between what a customer settles for and what he wants exactly” (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p.78).
- All current CRM strategies involve customer sacrifice
- Current CRM strategies are designed for the average customer-every customer's success goal which deviates from the average-no customer is average

Table 5: Initial Theoretical Framework for Customer Success

	Customer success foundational premise	Current CRM construct challenges	Theoretical contribution for customer success
FP1	Customer success is always customer defined	Firms may deliver solely the product/service to the customer; Customer success objectives may not be achieved	Customer-defined success allows firms to understand their customers; ensures higher levels of success for both parties
FP2	Customer success is always co-created	Firms may attempt to determine customer needs; Customers' needs may be misunderstood	Co-creation enhances the interests of both the firm and the customer to create value
FP3	Customer success is always customer-centric	Firms may focus more on the product/service; The firm-customer may not be long-term	Customer centricity ensures that the firm's focus is always on the needs of each customer
FP4	Customer success always involves mass customization	Firms may find it difficult to endure evolving marketplaces; Customers may switch loyalties	Mass customization creates stronger bonds by recognizing individual customers' needs
FP5	Customer success always involves objective outcomes	Firms may depend on subjective perceptions; Customers may not fully trust these strategies	Objectivity provides clarity for the customer; metrics such as profitability are more standardized and precise
FP6	Customer success is always a continuous journey	Firms may focus on the transactional stage of customer relationships; Customer involvement is minimized	Customer success ensures that customers are always involved in their journey as their goals constantly evolve
FP7	Customer success always involves customer-defined value	Firms may guess what represents value for the customer; Customer defined value may not be recognized	Value, defined by the customer, provides guidance for firms to properly deliver end value
FP8	Customer success is always proactive	Firms may be reactive to customer issues as they occur; Customers may feel that the firms are not in tune with constant changes	Proactive strategies address issues before they occur; proactive contact with customers enhances trust and loyalty
FP9	Customer success always minimizes customer sacrifice	Firms may involve customer sacrifice and design strategies for the average customer; Customers may feel compelled to sacrifice to attain their goals	Minimizing customer sacrifice protects the customer from settling and encourages the customer to seek out their desired goals

Table 6: Practical Contributions of Customer Success

	Customer success foundational premise	Potential outcomes for companies	Potential outcomes for customers
FP1	Customer success is always customer defined	Better understanding of customer success objectives; higher levels of success (e.g., profitability)	Customers achieve higher levels of success (e.g., profitability)
FP2	Customer success is always co-created	Co-creation helps the firm jointly create outcomes with the customer	Customers directly participate in value creation
FP3	Customer success is always customer-centric	Customer centricity helps firms to put the needs of the customer first	Customers' long-term needs are prioritized by the firm
FP4	Customer success always involves mass customization	Mass customization helps firms to better recognize individual customer needs	Individual customer outcomes are much improved
FP5	Customer success always involves objective outcomes	Objective outcomes help firms gather an accurate measurement of customer desires	Customers are provided with long-term sustainability and clarity
FP6	Customer success is always a continuous journey	Continuous trajectories help firms to attain long-term commitment from their customers	Customers remain involved in their long-term customer journey
FP7	Customer success always involves customer-defined value	Customer-defined value helps firms to deliver accurate end value	Customers' desired value is delivered
FP8	Customer success is always proactive	Proactive strategies help firms to stay ahead of customer issues	Customers' concerns are addressed in a more timely manner
FP9	Customer success always minimizes customer sacrifice	Minimizing customer sacrifice helps firms to encourage customers to achieve their desired goals	Customers are better able to achieve their desired goals

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Hypotheses Development

A G2C relationship refers to the exchange of information and support between the government and its consumers by responding to issues or by delivering products and services (Government to consumer markets, 2020). The construct of customer success may be ideally suited to study pandemic response outcomes in the G2C marketplace. Governments do not normally have a profitability motive. Yet, their actions are often evaluated based on the desired success outcomes of its customers (taxpayers, citizens, and other relevant constituencies), especially in times of crisis. Constructs such as customer satisfaction are too subjective to be meaningful in such scenarios; the use of constructs such as customer delight may result in peripheral conclusions, at best. On the other hand, the concept of customer success can be tailored to a variety of customer-desired outcomes (e.g., health-related, economy-related). For the following hypotheses, the pandemic customer outcomes are cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. A decrease in these outcomes would be a positive effect during the pandemic.

Vaccines are highly effective at providing immunity or protection from disease. In the United States, vaccine-preventable diseases affect fewer children and adults compared to a century ago, and many serious diseases have been eradicated completely (Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy [OIDP], 2021). Despite numerous challenges, vaccinations have contributed to the success of providing protection against COVID-19.

Despite some criticism, mask mandates have proven to be effective in controlling the spread of the virus (National Constitution Center, 2021). By blocking the release of virus-containing droplets, masks prevent infected individuals from exposing others to COVID-19, which

is especially relevant because it is estimated that at least half of COVID-19 infections may be contracted by individuals who do not display symptoms (Brooks and Butler, 2021). The longer that mask mandates are implemented, the higher the likelihood of achieving customer success outcomes. The longer period has allowed people to witness the importance of the mandates and to accept them as relevant (Gee and Gupta, 2020). Additionally, in some states, the earlier that mask mandates are applied and implemented could affect the success outcomes of the fight against the pandemic. States, like New York, that applied mask mandates earlier are also likely to experience faster economic recovery (Smith, 2020).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended late in July 2021 that fully vaccinated people should wear masks indoors in public areas where transmission is high (Katella, 2021). Despite being effective and offering great turnaround times, vaccines provide only 94% to 95% protection (Cleveland Clinic, 2021). In the 5% who do not respond to the COVID-19 vaccine, there is no way of knowing who will be at risk (Cleveland Clinic, 2021). People who have been vaccinated may be causing the virus to spread if they do not wear a mask until more people have been vaccinated. However, pushback against masking in certain states has caused customer success outcomes to vary. Applying concepts such as customer success in public health can also contribute to higher success rates in disease outcomes. Therefore, research will determine how states that apply customer success strategies achieve more than states that are reluctant to apply them. Consequently, I propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: Vaccination rates positively affect pandemic customer success outcomes.

H1b: Mask mandates moderate the relationship between vaccination rates and pandemic customer success outcomes.

The pandemic response in the United States has been clouded by political interference, which has had both positive and negative impacts on the government and its citizens. COVID-19 continues to divide Republicans and Democrats (Thomson-DeVeaux, 2020). COVID-19 was less of a worry for Republicans than it was for Democrats, perhaps because of then-President Trump's repeated downplaying of its threat.

According to the Pew Research Center, Republican respondents have stated less concern about hospitalization or unknowingly transferring viruses compared to Democrats (Thomson-DeVeaux, 2020). The partisan gap significantly widened between April and June of 2020 during the initial onset of the pandemic outbreak (Thomson-DeVeaux, 2020). At the time, a majority (54%) of Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters followed pandemic news, and an equal percentage of Republicans (48%) did the same (Mitchell et al., 2021). After the November 2020 election, the partisan divide widened, with Democrats (47%) more likely than Republicans (28%) to follow pandemic developments closely (Mitchell et al., 2021). The Republican Party tended to be less concerned with media coverage, were more critical of the media, and felt the media focused too much on the pandemic.

One of the issues that have created political division is the mask mandate implemented by governors of various states, especially those still in a state of emergency. States with female governors were fast movers in implementing measures more aggressively and efficiently to curb the spread of COVID-19 (Riggs & Catalano 2020; Sergent & Stajkovic 2020). For instance, Governor Kelly (Kansas) and Governor Whitmer (Michigan) adopted school closures quite earlier than their male counterparts in other states (Riggs & Catalano 2020).

These findings are supported by a qualitative analysis conducted by Sergent and Stajkovic (2020), which showed that states with female governors reported fewer death rates

during the pandemic. However, from an economic perspective, states with male governors were faster in closing non-essential businesses (Riggs & Catalano 2020). Pew Research Center study, “Men or Women: Who's the Better Leader?” noted that women scored higher in effort, compassion, outgoingness, creativity, and ambition while men scored better in decisiveness (Taylor et al., 2008).

Certain political parties and leaders have opposed COVID-19 guidelines and created confusion on appropriate actions to take (Smith, 2020). Single-party control at the state level means that leaders from that party might not consider the other political party's feelings and ideas, creating a situation where political ideology drives all decisions and responses (Smith, 2020). Despite being aimed at reducing the spread of the virus and promoting economic recovery, all decisions during the pandemic are interpreted based on political ideology. Consequently, I propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: Political ideology affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H2b: Governor Gender moderates the relationship between political ideology and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Based on cultural background and place of origin, race and ethnicity determine a person's categorization in the United States. Responses to the pandemic have varied by race and ethnicity. As COVID-19 invaded the world in 2020, minority communities reported higher death rates and infection rates (Fields et al., 2021). A low success rate has been reported among those from minority ethnic and social backgrounds in some regions. In addition to not being represented in institutions such as hospitals, minority communities have limited access to health care services, among other social and economic challenges (Fields et al., 2021).

Particularly in the United States, marginalized minorities have fewer members and are less represented in the population. Many minorities reside in vulnerable environments, especially within certain areas of each state. Mortality rates and new cases of COVID-19 demonstrate the inequitable distribution of resources. Low-income citizens, especially those of minority races and ethnicities, have been severely affected (Lopez et al., 2020). Due to the pandemic, unemployment has increased, resulting in limited incomes that are often insufficient to buy essential commodities such as food and clothing (Despard et al., 2020). Thus, minorities' lower customer success rate during the COVID-19 pandemic is due to income disparity and limited economic opportunities. Consequently, I propose the following hypotheses:

H3a: Race affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H3b: Income moderates the relationship between race and pandemic customer success outcomes.

For the majority of 2020 and into 2021, many businesses, aside from those providing essential services, remained closed, causing financial hardship for both employers and employees. As vaccination rates increase, society's response to the pandemic will change, along with the rate at which things will return to normal. Because several states allow fully vaccinated individuals to do things non-vaccinated people cannot do, states with high vaccination rates have experienced a faster economic recovery (Muro and Austin, 2021).

As of 2020, healthcare insurers in the United States vowed to cover 100% of COVID-19 treatments and eliminate deductibles and co-pays for hospitalizations estimated to cost several thousand dollars (Rowland, 2021). In some cases, before vaccines were broadly available, most

insurers reestablished COVID-19 co-payments and deductibles for patients in 2021. Insurance companies paid less in 2020 for elective procedures suspended by hospitals during the crisis despite industry profits (Rowland, 2021). According to a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis (Markowitz, 2021), by the end of October 2021, most large insurance companies were charging co-insurance and deductibles for some COVID-19 tests and treatments. State and federal governments and private payers can use their purchasing power to influence vaccine pricing and reimbursement by analyzing the price and reimbursement regulations governing vaccines in different markets (Schwartz et al., 2020). This, in turn, can affect income relating to the COVID-19 vaccination rate. Consequently, I propose the following hypotheses:

H4a: Income affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

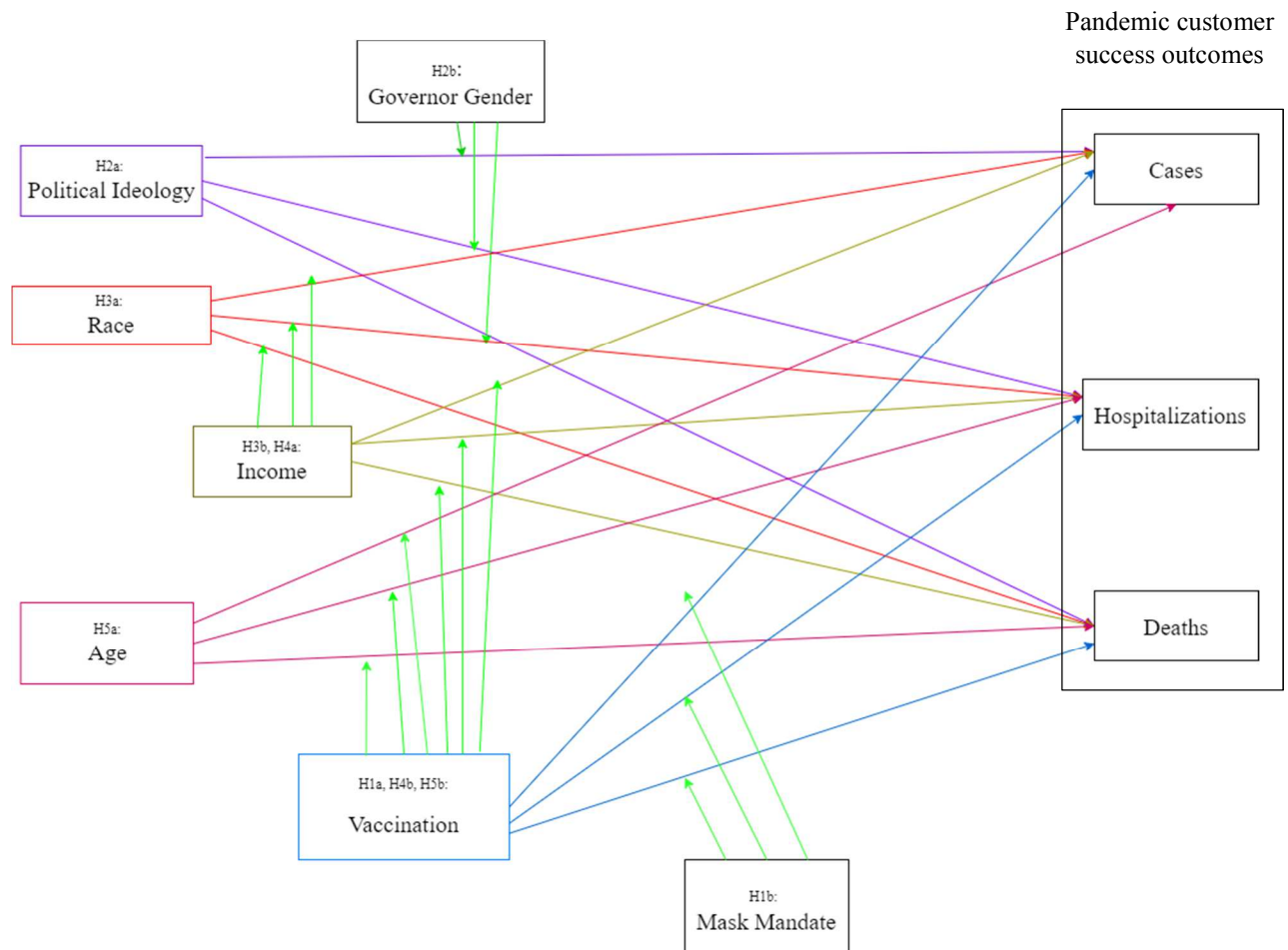
H4b: Vaccination rates moderate the relationship between income and pandemic customer success outcomes.

According to the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (2021b), age increases the risk of contracting COVID-19. For example, older adults can be very vulnerable to COVID-19. While middle-aged and younger people are susceptible to the virus, if an older adult gets an infection, COVID-19 can be very dangerous. Older people are certainly suffering from underlying conditions such as cardiovascular problems, diabetes type II, and asthma, among other disorders (Center for Diseases Control and Prevention, 2021b). Over 50s and 60s, people are at high risk, and over 70s, 80s, and 90s, the risk is even higher (Center for Diseases Control and Prevention, 2021b).

Age is an essential factor in vaccination since some vaccines might harm children's immune systems. Increased vaccine eligibility ensures more people are protected against illness. Extension of vaccine administration to include children will significantly help in the fight against COVID-19 among the U.S. population. According to the CDC, children more than five years old qualify to be vaccinated (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021a). Though children above five years old are at a lower risk of severe illness, vaccinating them helps protect vulnerable family members and reduces the spread of the virus in the community (Kates et al., 2021). This extension will increase the customer success rate in the U.S. population. Consequently, I propose the following hypotheses:

H5a: Age affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H5b: Vaccination moderates the relationship between vaccine eligibility and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Figure 3: Conceptual Model**Conceptual Map Code:**

Green Lines = Moderating Effects

Solid Color Lines = Main Effects

Methodology for Empirical Section

This study will also empirically examine the G2C market scenario's impact on customer success by analyzing the effect of government responses on pandemic customer outcomes such as low death rates. It will also examine how COVID-19 in the U.S. is affected by how each state operates and their government's strategies and if they are effective or not. The study will look at the various aspects, such as the vaccinations administered and the various healthcare interventions. For instance, other elements such as political ideology and other important issues like the various policies implemented by each state and their issuance during the pandemic play a critical role in the whole process. These and various interventions and how they are implemented determine whether states are effective in their COVID-19 responses.

Data Collection

The data utilized for this study consists of secondary data from highly credible, entrusted, publicly available organizations and government resources. To begin, the pandemic customer success outcome data (cases, hospitalizations, and deaths) and other pandemic variables such as vaccinations and tests were collected from the John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center and the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Since the beginning of the pandemic, key COVID-19 information was collected from the "COVID-19 Data Repository by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University" within the John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. That data included cases, hospitalizations, deaths, tests, etc. (Dong et al., 2020). The cases, hospitalizations, and deaths were aggregated by US state daily reporting. While cases and deaths were reported within the data starting from January 1, 2020, to the present day; however, collecting hospitalization data was not a direct process.

On August 28, 2020, The JHU CSSE stopped reporting hospitalization data. The reasoning was that many US states have not reported cumulative hospitalizations and are unlikely to do so in the future. They recommended and directed others to use the COVID Tracking Project (CTP) as it is a better choice because it collects state-level data and documents data quality issues. (Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, 2020). Therefore, I began to collect from the CTP. However, they then directed me to another data resource, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The CTP's hospital data reporting system was transferred to the HHS Protect Public Data Hub on July 15, 2020 (Luo and Pollack, 2021). Before July 15, 2020, at the start of the pandemic, hospitalizations were voluntarily and self-reporting, which limited the data. Since July 15, 2020, as state-level time series data have become broader and more comprehensive, hospitalization data have become complete and more accurate, and hospital reporting has become mandatory (Luo and Pollack, 2021). Therefore, the final dataset consists of hospitalization data only from the HHS. Despite the limitations of the overall hospitalization data, hospitalizations were an outcome variable that could allude to the effectiveness status of each state during the pandemic.

Extensive data on vaccinations was collected by the Johns Hopkins Centers for Civic Impact within the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. They combine each state's public health dashboards and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Vaccine Tracker to create their data. Their reasoning behind this method is based on the latest reporting of that metric (from the state or CDC); they will report the highest value. On the other hand, if no state provides vaccination data, the CDC Vaccine Tracker will be used (Bertran de Lis and Vaughan, 2021). Similar to vaccinations, Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center's testing data source consists of a combination of each state's public health dashboards and data from the

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (Bertran de Lis and Vaughan, 2021). The same logic applies to cases where if testing data is not available from the state, they will utilize the HHS testing data.

Mask mandates and mask-wearing policies, in general, are a very intricate and critical part of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDC collected publicly available state data to identify the occasions when masks were required in public by “executive orders, administrative orders, resolutions, and proclamations” related to COVID-19 in states and territories from April 8, 2020, through August 15, 2021 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021c). To fill in the rest of the study’s data until February 2022, publicly available data was collected from the COVID-19 Policy Dashboard within Multistate’s platform, a company that provides government relations services to states and local governments (MultiState, 2022b).

Publicly available data on each state's governor and local status was also collected from MultiState. This data is also comprised of gubernatorial and legislative partisan control in the states, such as the governor, the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the political party with which each branch is affiliated (MultiState, 2022a). For the purpose of this study and the hypotheses, only the governor, along with their political party affiliation and gender, was used in the study as they also are the position that controls the state the most.

The demographic and economic variables of this study were collected from the COVID-19 Demographic and Economic Resources located in the United States Census Bureau. Many data variables were prepared from the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the bureau. From their publicly available data, variables such as population, age, gender, race, ethnicity, income, healthcare coverage, employment status, and occupation types from each state

were collected (United States Census Bureau, 2021a, 2021b). For the purpose of this study and the hypotheses, only population, age, gender, race, and income were used in the study, as they are some of the main variables that can impact citizens during the pandemic. Each level of these variables was gathered to provide the opportunity to examine variety. However, specifically, total population, median age, male and female, White and African American, and median income were examined in the analysis.

Data Preparation

For this study, in Microsoft Excel and Stata, I prepared the data for proper statistical analyses. I split the variables into two datasets based on time-variant and time-invariant. The time-variant data was consolidated daily in long format through Power Query Editor. I then sorted each of the variables by date and then by State. Next, I merged all of the variables into one dataset, and after creating one large dataset, I isolated the variables that I wanted to utilize for the study. I conducted both a 14-day moving average per state, meaning that the data preparation considers past days and averages the days. In a 14-day moving average, the cases of the past 14 days are recorded, summed up, and divided by 14. We used 14 days since the cycle of the COVID has been about 14 days. Using these moving averages considers lagged observations which can make the data smoother over time. For the time invariance variables, which were categorical (Yes or No, Republican or Democrat, Male or Female) in the data, they were recoded into 0 and 1. Next, the time-variant and invariant variables and dataset were grouped weekly, starting from March 9, 2020, to February 14, 2022.

For further preparation using Stata, I transformed the COVID-19 tests, cases, vaccines, hospitalizations, and death 14-day average variables into log variables to reduce the skewness of the original data. Also transformed the total population variable into a log variable to reduce the

skewness of the data. I used proportions of the female and male populations. Also, I included median income in the data and standardized it to balance the coefficient. Also, I included the median age in the data. Then I calculated the proportions of each variable to estimate the patterns of the variables within the total population. The remaining variables, such as race, did not need to be combined as they were already a proportion of the total population of the state.

Sample

Secondary data has been collected from various other areas, including places like the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Center (U.S. COVID-19 cases, deaths, and tests), United States Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. COVID-19 hospitalizations), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (mask mandates), MultiState (governor party and governor gender), and the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. COVID-19 demographic and economic variables- age, gender, race, income). From these sources, a sample (n=50) was collected from all 50 States of America from dates from March 14, 2020, to February 14, 2022. To minimize subjectivity bias, all 50 states in a cluster, excluding the District of Colombia, will be analyzed.

Measures

There are currently three outcome variables and variables that will be analyzed to include the following: cases, hospitalizations, and deaths

Customer Success Outcome Variables

Cases. Total cases administered per state were analyzed. This variable consists of all probable and confirmed cases. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is induced by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. These ill people with COVID-19 frequently have mild to severe ailments and recover

without special treatment. Several would, however, become critically ill and develop complications (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020). Analysis definition: l_cas14 = Cases averaging 14 days.

Hospitalizations. Total hospitalizations reported per state were analyzed. This variable consists of total confirmed adult and pediatric hospitalizations. Many patients were hospitalized and were in the intensive care unit due to COVID-19 (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020). Analysis definition: l_hos14 = Hospitalizations averaging 14 days.

Deaths. Total deaths administered per state were analyzed. This combination consists of all probable and confirmed cases. Infection with the new coronavirus strain SARS-CoV-2 and the associated syndrome COVID-19 has been linked to over two million deaths worldwide. Patients with older and long-standing chronic health problems are at an elevated risk of fatal clinical outcomes (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020). Analysis definition: l_dea14 = Deaths averaging 14 days.

Vaccinations. Total vaccines administered per state were analyzed. This combination comprises all types (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson) and all levels of doses (first, second, third). Everybody aged five and up is now qualified for a COVID-19 vaccination. Anybody over the age of 12 is qualified for a second dose. If people become infected, the COVID-19 vaccine is extremely useful in preventing hospitalization or death. Getting vaccinated protects those around. Vaccines are safe and have undergone extensive testing (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020).

Variables

Tests. Total tests administered per state were analyzed. This combination comprises of all types (viral, antigen, etc.) Viral tests determine whether people are currently infected with

SARS-CoV-2, which induces COVID-19. A positive test result indicates that people are infected. Antibody blood tests, also known as antibody tests, examine people's blood for antibodies that indicate whether people have previously been infected with the virus. (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020).

Population. The total population, along with male and female proportions, was analyzed. The number of Americans infected with COVID-19 reached at least 103 million (31 percent of the U.S. population) by the end of 2020 (Pei et al., 2021). The mortality and infection rates tend to be higher in states with a high population density (Roy and Ghosh, 2020). Vaccines have been shown to protect vulnerable populations, including children, seniors, and individuals with underlying health conditions (The White House, 2021). Analysis definition: Total Population = l_popu , Percent Male Population = $mpop$.

Political ideology (Governor Party). The political party of each United States governor was analyzed. The variable consists of Democrat and Republican, which are coded as 0 and 1. Coronavirus became a highly politicized pandemic in the US. These affected policies addressing the spread of the virus. Analysis definition: $GovParty2 = (\text{Political Ideology}) \text{ Governor Party}$.

Governor Gender. Governor Gender was analyzed in this study. This variable consists of Male and Female, which are coded as 0 and 1. Analysis definition: $GovGender2 = \text{Governor Gender}$.

Race. Race was analyzed in this study. This variable consists of both White and African American (Black). While there is no assumption that humans of color are more likely to be influenced by COVID-19 due to genetic or other biological factors, they are more likely to have fundamental health problems (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020). Analysis definition:

Prowhpop=population of the white race in each state, problpop=population of African American race in each state.

Income. Median income was analyzed in this study. COVID-19 has affected the U.S economy. As a result, most individuals' income levels have lowered since many businesses and industries were closed due to government directives. Analysis definition: Med_inc_std=Median income standardized.

Age. Median age was analyzed. The COVID-19 virus infects individuals of all ages. The COVID-19 virus infects both adults and children (IHME COVID-19 Forecasting Team, 2020). Individuals over 65 and those previously diagnosed with respiratory diseases, including asthma, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular problems, are especially vulnerable to being severely ill with the virus. Analysis definition: Medage=median age in each state.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics among variables, means, standard deviations, and reliabilities are presented below.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
cases	4,750	12.1139	1.781217	5.774551	15.97714
tests	4,997	14.48905	2.002492	4.65396	18.75879
vaccinations	5,099	8.562203	7.343343	0	18.06859
hospitaliz~s	5,079	6.570473	3.470953	0	11.94289
deaths	4,750	8.093246	1.728265	1.386294	11.30892
totalpopul~n	5,099	15.18465	1.038692	12.68033	17.48631
malepopula~n	5,099	.501886	.0554404	.4835633	.8862937
governorpa~y	5,099	1.53991	.4984535	1	2
governorge~r	5,099	1.819965	.3842545	1	2
income	5,099	-4.16e-09	1	-1.827223	2.07261
whitepopul~n	5,099	.746576	.1623441	.0173698	.9431146
blackpopul~n	5,099	.1067017	.0936345	.0050474	.3771667
age	5,099	38.47815	2.337978	30.8	44.7
maskmandate	5,099	1.386939	.4870972	1	2

Correlation Matrix

Cases. Tests ($r=0.939$, $p<0.05$), Vaccinations ($r=0.693$, $p<0.05$), Hospitalizations ($r=0.764$, $p<0.05$), Deaths ($r=0.953$, $p<0.05$), Total Population ($r=0.622$, $p<0.05$), Governor Gender ($r=0.043$, $p<0.05$), Income ($r=0.025$, $p>0.05$), and Black (African American) Population ($r=0.30$, $p<0.05$) were *positively* correlated with Cases. Male Population ($r= -0.0196$, $p<0.05$), Governor Party ($r= -0.094$, $p<0.05$), White Population ($r= -0.005$, $p>0.05$), Age ($r= -0.133$, $p<0.05$), and Mask Mandates ($r= -0.090$, $p<0.05$) were *negatively* correlated with Cases.

Hospitalizations. Deaths ($r=0.654$, $p<0.05$), Total Population ($r=0.265$, $p<0.05$), Governor Gender ($r=0.004$, $p>0.05$), Income ($r=0.025$, $p>0.05$), Black (African American) Population ($r=0.144$, $p<0.05$), and Mask Mandates ($r=0.145$, $p<0.05$) were *positively* correlated with Hospitalizations. Male Population ($r= -0.083$, $p<0.05$), Governor Party ($r= -0.029$, $p<0.05$), Income ($r= -0.035$, $p<0.05$), White Population ($r= -0.015$, $p>0.05$), and Age ($r= -0.045$, $p<0.05$) were *negatively* correlated with Hospitalizations.

Deaths. Total Population ($r=0.730$, $p<0.05$), Governor Gender ($r=0.023$, $p>0.05$), Income ($r=0.025$, $p>0.05$), Black (African American) Population ($r=0.391$, $p<0.05$) were *positively* correlated with Deaths. Male Population ($r= -0.261$, $p<0.05$), Governor Party ($r= -0.160$, $p<0.05$), White Population ($r= -0.005$, $p<0.05$), Age ($r= -0.033$, $p<0.05$), and Mask Mandates ($r= -0.006$, $p>0.05$) were *negatively* correlated with Deaths. The remaining correlation effects are located in the Table below.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix (* p-value < 0.05)

	cases	tests	vaccin~s	hospit~s	deaths	totalp~n	malepo~n
cases	1.0000						
tests	0.9385*	1.0000					
vaccinations	0.6925*	0.6823*	1.0000				
hospitaliz~s	0.7637*	0.8070*	0.5694*	1.0000			
deaths	0.9528*	0.8899*	0.5740*	0.6544*	1.0000		
totalpopul~n	0.6221*	0.4771*	0.0796*	0.2654*	0.7301*	1.0000	
malepopula~n	-0.1962*	-0.1641*	-0.0271	-0.0835*	-0.2613*	-0.3928*	1.0000
governorpa~y	-0.0940*	-0.1359*	-0.0190	-0.0294*	-0.1603*	-0.2191*	0.1457*
governorge~r	0.0426*	0.0543*	0.0069	0.0040	0.0232	0.0474*	0.0712*
income	0.0248	0.1198*	0.0142	-0.0357*	0.0421*	0.0985*	0.0204
whitepopul~n	-0.0054	-0.0193	-0.0004	-0.0147	-0.0051	0.0284*	-0.6177*
blackpopul~n	0.2960*	0.1805*	0.0292*	0.1436*	0.3907*	0.3835*	-0.1839*
age	-0.1330*	-0.0057	-0.0039	-0.0447*	-0.0336*	-0.0804*	-0.1143*
maskmandate	-0.0903*	0.0868*	-0.2099*	0.1454*	-0.0057	0.1137*	-0.1023*
	govern~y	govern~r	income	whitep~n	blackp~n	age	maskma~e
governorpa~y	1.0000						
governorge~r	0.1942*	1.0000					
income	-0.2843*	0.1990*	1.0000				
whitepopul~n	0.0720*	-0.1614*	-0.2026*	1.0000			
blackpopul~n	0.0333*	0.1277*	-0.2164*	-0.3397*	1.0000		
age	-0.1803*	-0.1091*	-0.0652*	0.1744*	0.0068	1.0000	
maskmandate	-0.4227*	-0.0648*	0.2103*	-0.0856*	-0.0204	0.1484*	1.0000

Model

Analysis. We adopted a panel data regression for this analysis. The data analysis starts with basic descriptive statistics and correlation. Next, a panel data regression with weekly fixed effects was adopted for the model. I could not include state-fixed effects because I also explored the effect of time-invariant factors across the states. In order to account for within-state correlations, we also clustered the standard errors at the state level. This is also useful for absorbing regressions with varying coefficients for each fixed effects category. It also involves analyzing moderating effects through the interaction of the focal variables. In addition, this method of data analysis allows the analyst of the data to develop or gain a better understanding (Bush, 2020). As the final data was collected from March 14th, 2020, to February 14th, 2022 [24 months], using fixed effects for dates. Our analysis will consist of a comparison of variables from before (<January 1, 2021) and after (>January 1, 2021) vaccines were administered in the United States. Due to some public data errors and daily updates regarding COVID-19, results

will be skewed and representative of the period in which the data was collected. Here are the models for number of cases, hospitalization, and deaths.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \log(\text{Cases}_{st}) = & \beta_{0t} + \beta_1 \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st}) + \beta_2 \log(\text{Tests}_{st}) + \beta_3 \log(\text{Population}) \\
 & + \beta_4 \text{Male}_s + \beta_5 \text{Mask. Mandate}_s + \beta_6 (\text{Mask. Mandate}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) \\
 & + \beta_7 \text{Gov. Republican. Male}_s + \beta_8 \text{Gov. Republican. Female}_s \\
 & + \beta_9 \text{Gov. Democratic. Male}_s + \beta_{10} \text{Income}_s \\
 & + \beta_{11} \text{Race. White}_s + \beta_{12} (\text{Race. White}_s \times \text{Income}_s) \\
 & + \beta_{13} \text{Race. African. American}_s + \beta_{14} (\text{Race. African. American}_s \\
 & \times \text{Income}_s) + \beta_{15} (\text{Income}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) + \beta_{16} \text{Age}_s + \beta_{17} (\text{Age}_s \\
 & \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) + \epsilon_{st}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \log(\text{Hospitalization}_{st}) \\
 = & \beta_{0t} + \beta_1 \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st}) + \beta_2 \log(\text{Case}_{st}) + \beta_3 \log(\text{Population}) \\
 & + \beta_4 \text{Male}_s + \beta_5 \text{Mask. Mandate}_s + \beta_6 (\text{Mask. Mandate}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) \\
 & + \beta_7 \text{Gov. Republican. Male}_s + \beta_8 \text{Gov. Republican. Female}_s \\
 & + \beta_9 \text{Gov. Democratic. Male}_s + \beta_{10} \text{Income}_s \\
 & + \beta_{11} \text{Race. White}_s + \beta_{12} (\text{Race. White}_s \times \text{Income}_s) \\
 & + \beta_{13} \text{Race. African American}_s + \beta_{14} (\text{African. American}_s \\
 & \times \text{Income}_s) + \beta_{15} (\text{Income}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) \\
 & + \beta_{16} \text{Age}_s + \beta_{17} (\text{Age}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) + \epsilon_{st}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
\log(\text{Death}_{st}) = & \beta_{0t} + \beta_1 \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st}) + \beta_2 \log(\text{Case}_{st}) \\
& + \beta_3 \log(\text{Hospitalization}_{st}) + \beta_4 \log(\text{Population}) + \beta_5 \text{Male}_s \\
& + \beta_6 \text{Mask. Mandate}_s + \beta_7 (\text{Mask. Mandate}_s \\
& \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) + \beta_8 \text{Gov. Republican. Male}_s \\
& + \beta_9 \text{Gov. Republican. Female}_s + \beta_{10} \text{Gov. Democratic. Male}_s \\
& + \beta_{11} \text{Income}_s + \beta_{12} \text{Race. White}_s + \beta_{13} (\text{Race. White}_s \\
& \times \text{Income}_s) \\
& + \beta_{14} \text{Race. African. American}_s + \beta_{15} (\text{Race. African. American}_s \\
& \times \text{Income}_s) + \beta_{16} (\text{Income}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) \\
& + \beta_{17} \text{Age}_s + \beta_{18} (\text{Age}_s \times \log(\text{Vaccination}_{st})) + \epsilon_{st}
\end{aligned}$$

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Once a pandemic occurs, the government has a responsibility to protect its citizens and residents and provide solutions to curb the problem. In this study, the citizens are viewed as the customers whose desired outcomes are a lower number of cases, a lower number of hospitalizations, and a lower number of deaths. In a G2C scenario, a country's "customer success" in response to a pandemic can be calculated by satisfying desired customer outcomes. Factors that can potentially affect customer success during a pandemic include, but are not limited to, vaccination rates, the use of masks, political ideology, race, gender, income, and age. Thus, customer success in a G2C scenario involves analyzing how effectively the government performs during a pandemic. By utilizing different time periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, the results indicate a significant change in outcomes. Along with the pre- vaccine administration analysis of COVID-19 outcomes, using an approximately twenty-day lag from when the first vaccine was administered in the United States provided a means to compare the significant differences of each timeline.

Test of Hypotheses

H1a: Vaccination positively affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H1b: Mask mandates moderate the relationship between vaccination rates and pandemic customer success outcomes.

The first COVID-19 vaccine was administered in the United States on December 14, 2020. This study analyzed the effects on cases, hospitalizations, and deaths before January 2021, when vaccine distribution began, starting with the elderly and those with relatively serious comorbidities. Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine

administration, the number of tests had a significant relationship with **cases** ($r=0.881$, $p<0.05$). Before vaccine administration, cases had a significant relationship with **hospitalizations** ($r=0.439$, $p<0.05$). Before vaccine administration, the number of cases had a significant relationship with **deaths** ($r=.0929$, $p<0.05$).

Taking into consideration lag effects due to distribution and dissemination of the vaccine to the general population, vaccination and outcome data from January 2021 to February 2022 were also analyzed. Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. From January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between the number of vaccines administered and **cases** was statistically significant ($r= -0.581$, $p<0.05$). The relationship between the number of vaccines and **hospitalizations** was not statistically significant ($r= -0.086$, $p>0.05$). The relationship between vaccination rates and **deaths** was not significant ($r= -0.055$, $p>0.05$). In sum, the results indicate that, statistically, vaccination has a significant relationship with cases but did not have a significant relationship with hospitalizations and deaths. Hypothesis 1a (H1a) was not fully supported as vaccination had no significant relationship with hospitalizations or deaths.

H1b: Mask mandates moderate the relationship between vaccination rates and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine administration, mask mandates had no significant relationship with **cases** ($r= 0.153$, $p>0.05$). Before vaccine administration, mask mandates had no significant relationship with **hospitalizations** ($r= -0.091$, $p>0.05$). Before vaccine administration, mask mandates had a significant relationship with **deaths** ($r= 0.262$, $p<0.05$).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between vaccination and **cases**, with the variable of mask mandates included, was not statistically significant ($r = 0.028$, $p > 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between vaccination rates and **hospitalizations**, with the variable of mask mandates included, was statistically significant ($r = 0.067$, $p > 0.05$). The relationship between vaccination rates and **deaths**, with the variable of mask mandates included, was statistically significant ($r = -0.058$, $p < 0.05$). In sum, the results indicate that mask mandates moderate the relationship between vaccination and deaths but do not moderate the relationship between vaccination rates and cases or hospitalizations. Hypothesis 1b (H1b) was not fully supported as mask mandates did not moderate the relationship between vaccinations and cases or hospitalizations.

H2a: Political ideology affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H2b: Gender moderates the relationship between political ideology and pandemic customer success outcomes.

The political ideology of a state includes the political affiliation of that state's governor. Both Republican and Democratic Parties will be analyzed. Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine administration, political ideology had no significant relationship with **cases** (Republican: [male: $r = 0.156$, $p > 0.05$, female: $r = 0.484$, $p > 0.05$], Democratic: [male: $r = 0.150$, $p > 0.05$]). Before vaccine administration, political ideology had a significant relationship with **hospitalizations** (Republican: [male: $r = 0.393$, $p < 0.05$, female: $r = 0.374$, $p < 0.05$], Democratic: [male: $r = 0.150$, $p < 0.05$]). Before vaccine administration, political ideology had a significant relationship with **deaths** (Republican: [male: $r = 0.440$, $p < 0.05$, female: $r = -0.588$, $p < 0.05$], Democratic: [male: $r = -0.452$, $p < 0.05$]).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between political ideology and **cases** was not statistically significant (Republican: [male: $r = 0.175$, $p > 0.05$, female: $r = 0.382$, $p < 0.05$], Democratic: [male: $r = 0.157$, $p < 0.05$]). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between political ideology and **hospitalizations** was not statistically significant (Republican: [male: $r = 0.029$, $p > 0.05$, female: $r = -0.115$, $p > 0.05$], Democratic: [male: $r = -0.014$, $p > 0.05$]). The relationship between political ideology and **deaths** was not statistically significant (Republican: [male: $r = -0.151$, $p < 0.05$, female: $r = -0.038$, $p > 0.05$], Democratic: [male: $r = -0.231$, $p < 0.05$]). In sum, the results indicate that, statistically, political ideology (Republican - male) had a significant relationship with cases and deaths but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations, and political ideology (Republican - female) only had a significant relationship with cases. Political ideology (Democratic - male) had a significant relationship with cases and deaths but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations. Hypothesis 2a (H2a) was not fully supported as political ideology (Republican – male and female together, Democratic – male) had no significant relationship with hospitalizations.

H2b: Governor Gender moderates the relationship between political ideology and pandemic customer success outcomes.

State governors' gender could have a big impact on the relationship between their political party affiliation and pandemic outcomes. Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine administration, the relationship between political ideology and **cases**, with the variable of gender included, was not statistically significant (Male: [Republican: $r = 0.156$, $p > 0.05$, Democratic: $r = 0.150$, $p > 0.05$], Female: [Republican: $r = 0.484$,

$p > 0.05$)). Before vaccine administration, the relationship between political ideology and **hospitalizations**, with the variable of gender included, was statistically significant (Male: [Republican: $r = 0.393$, $p < 0.05$, Democratic: $r = 0.414$, $p < 0.05$], Female: [Republican: $r = 0.374$, $p < 0.05$]). Before vaccine administration, the relationship between political ideology and **deaths**, with the variable of gender included, was statistically significant (Male: [Republican: $r = 0.440$, $p < 0.05$, Democratic: $r = -0.452$, $p < 0.05$], Female: [Republican: $r = -0.588$, $p < 0.05$]).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between political ideology and **cases**, with the variable of gender included, was statistically significant (Male: [Republican: $r = 0.175$, $p < 0.05$, Democratic: $r = 0.157$, $p < 0.05$], Female: [Republican: $r = 0.382$, $p < 0.05$]). The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between political ideology and **hospitalizations**, with the variable of gender included, was not statistically significant (Male: [Republican: $r = 0.029$, $p > 0.05$, Democratic: $r = -0.014$, $p > 0.05$], Female: [Republican: $r = -0.115$, $p > 0.05$]). The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between political ideology and **deaths**, with the variable of gender included, was statistically significant (Male: [Republican: $r = -0.151$, $p < 0.05$, Democratic: $r = -0.023$, $p < 0.05$], Female: [Republican: $r = -0.038$, $p < 0.05$]). In sum, the results indicate that Gender (male - Republican) does not moderate the relationship between political ideology and cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, and gender (male - Democratic) only moderates the relationship between political ideology with cases and deaths. Gender (female - Republican) only significantly moderates the relationship between political ideology and cases. Hypothesis 2b (H2b) was not fully supported as gender (male - Republican and Democratic, female -

Republican) moderated the between political ideology with cases or deaths but did not moderate the relationship between political ideology and hospitalizations.

H3a: Race affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H3b: Income moderates the relationship between race and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The race categories included in this study are White (Caucasian) and Black (African American). Before vaccine administration, race had no significant relationship with **cases** (white: $r = -0.052$, $p > 0.05$, black: $r = 1.617$, $p > 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, race had no significant relationship with **hospitalizations** (white: $r = 0.119$, $p > 0.05$, black: $r = -0.139$, $p > 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, race had no significant relationship with **deaths** (white: $r = -0.441$, $p > 0.05$, black: $r = 0.894$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The race categories included in this study are White (Caucasian) and Black (African American). The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between race and **cases** was not statistically significant (white: $r = 0.002$, $p > 0.05$, black: $r = -0.111$, $p > 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between race and **hospitalizations** was not statistically significant (white: $r = -0.108$, $p > 0.05$, black: $r = 0.734$, $p > 0.05$). The relationship between race and **deaths** was statistically significant (white: $r = -0.338$, $p < 0.05$, black: $r = 0.225$, $p > 0.05$). In sum, the results indicate that, statistically, race (White) affects deaths but does not affect cases or hospitalizations; however, race (African American) does not affect cases, hospitalizations, or deaths. Hypothesis 3a (H3a) was not supported as

White only had a significant relationship with deaths and had no significant relationship with cases and hospitalizations, while African Americans had no significant relationship with cases, hospitalizations, or deaths.

H3b: Income moderates the relationship between race and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine administration, race, with the variable of income included, had a significant relationship with **cases** (white: $r = 1.055$, $p < 0.05$, black: $r = 0.935$, $p < 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, race, with the variable of income included, had no significant relationship with **hospitalizations** (white: $r = -1.043$, $p < 0.05$, black: $r = 0.052$, $p > 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, race, with the variable of income included, had no significant relationship with **deaths** (white: $r = 1.454$, $p < 0.05$, black: $r = 0.533$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between race, with the variable of income included, and **cases** were not statistically significant (white: $r = 0.455$, $p < 0.05$, black: $r = 0.393$, $p > 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between race, with the variable of income included, and **hospitalizations** were not statistically significant (white: $r = 0.367$, $p > 0.05$, black: $r = 1.236$, $p < 0.05$). The relationship between race, with the variable of income included, and **deaths** was statistically significant (white: $r = 0.665$, $p < 0.05$, black: $r = 0.656$, $p > 0.05$). In sum, the results indicate that, statistically, race (White), with the variable of income included, affects cases and deaths but does not affect hospitalizations; however, race (African American), with the variable of income included, had a significant relationship with hospitalizations but had no significant relationship with cases or

deaths. Hypothesis 3b (H3b) was not fully supported as income did not moderate the relationship between race. Income moderated the relationship between race (White) and cases and deaths and did not moderate its relationship with hospitalizations, while income moderated the relationship between race (African American) and hospitalizations and did not moderate its relationship with cases or deaths.

H4a: Income affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H4b: Vaccination rates moderate the relationship between income and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine administration, income had no significant relationship with **cases** ($r = -0.890$, $p > 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, income had no significant relationship with **hospitalizations** ($r = 0.483$, $p > 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, income had no significant relationship with **deaths** ($r = -0.943$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between income and the number of **cases** was statistically significant ($r = -0.0656$, $p < 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between income and **hospitalizations** was not statistically significant ($r = 0.245$, $p > 0.05$). The relationship between income and **deaths** was statistically significant ($r = -0.650$, $p < 0.05$). In sum, income, statistically, had a significant relationship with cases and deaths but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations. Hypothesis 4a (H4a) was not supported as income had no significant relationship with hospitalizations.

H4b: Vaccination moderates the relationship between income and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between income and **cases**, with the variable of vaccination included, was not statistically significant ($r = 0.012$, $p > 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between income and **hospitalizations**, with the variable of vaccination included, was statistically significant ($r = -0.052$, $p < 0.05$). The relationship between income and **deaths** with the variable of vaccination included was not statistically significant ($r = 0.008$, $p > 0.05$). In sum, the results indicate that vaccination moderates the relationship between income and hospitalizations but do not moderate the relationship between income and cases or deaths. Hypothesis 4b (H4b) was not supported as vaccination did not moderate the relationship between income and hospitalizations.

H5a: Age affects pandemic customer success outcomes.

H5b: Vaccination moderates the relationship between age and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 9 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. Before vaccine administration, age had a significant relationship with **cases** ($r = -0.040$, $p < 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, age had a significant relationship with **hospitalizations** ($r = -0.048$, $p < 0.05$). Before vaccine administration, age had a significant relationship with **deaths** ($r = 0.100$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between age and **cases** was statistically significant ($r = -0.272$, $p < 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to

February 2022, the relationship between age and **hospitalizations** was not statistically significant ($r = 0.001$, $p > 0.05$). The relationship between age and **deaths** was statistically significant ($r = 0.331$, $p < 0.05$). In sum, income, statistically, had a significant relationship with cases and deaths but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations. In sum, the results indicate age had a significant relationship with cases but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations or deaths. Hypothesis 5a (H5a) was not supported as age had no significant relationship with hospitalizations or deaths.

H5b: Vaccination moderates the relationship between age and pandemic customer success outcomes.

Table 10 includes the estimated coefficients of the proposed model. The results indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between age, with the variable of vaccination included, and **cases** were statistically significant ($r = 0.016$, $p < 0.05$). The results also indicate that from January 2021 to February 2022, the relationship between age, with the variable of vaccination included, and **hospitalizations** was not statistically significant ($r = 0.001$, $p > 0.05$). The relationship between age, with the variable of vaccination included, and **deaths** was statistically significant ($r = -0.018$, $p < 0.05$). In sum, income, statistically, had a significant relationship with cases and deaths but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations. In sum, the results indicate age, with the variable of vaccination included, had a significant relationship with cases and deaths but had no significant relationship with hospitalizations. Hypothesis 5b (H5b) was not fully supported as vaccination did not moderate the relationship between age and hospitalizations or deaths.

Regression Summaries

Table 9: REGRESSION SUMMARY BEFORE VACCINATION

VARIABLES	(1) Cases	(2) Hospitalization	(3) Death
Tests	0.881 (0.127)***		
Cases		0.439 (0.162)***	0.929 (0.080)***
Population	0.195 (0.125)	0.267 (0.160)	0.116 (0.093)
Percent Male Population	-0.838 (1.690)	2.004 (1.729)	-3.801 (2.506)
Republican - Male	0.156 (0.127)	0.393 (0.134)***	0.440 (0.198)**
Democratic - Male	0.150 (0.121)	0.414 (0.119)***	-0.452 (0.204)**
Republican - Female	0.484 (0.315)	0.374 (0.186)**	-0.588 (0.225)**
Income	-0.890 (0.372)**	0.483 (0.324)	-0.943 (0.532)*
Race (White)	-0.052 (0.710)	0.119 (0.606)	-0.441 (0.950)
Race (White) × Income	1.055 (0.422)**	-1.043 (0.389)***	1.454 (0.630)**
Race (African American)	1.617 (0.862)*	-0.139 (0.651)	0.894 (0.983)
Race (African American) × Income	0.935 (0.410)**	0.052 (0.314)	0.533 (0.574)
Age	-0.040 (0.016)**	-0.048 (0.010)***	0.100 (0.035)***
Mask Mandate	0.153 (0.114)	-0.091 (0.123)	0.262 (0.091)***
Observations	1,800	1,787	1,800
R-squared	0.928	0.980	0.937

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 10: REGRESSION SUMMARY AFTER VACCINATION

VARIABLES	(1) Cases	(2) Hospitalization	(3) Vaccination	(4) Death
Tests	0.229 (0.073)***			
Cases		0.411 (0.133)***		1.207 (0.153)***
Vaccination	-0.581 (0.120)***	-0.086 (0.192)		-0.055 (0.251)
Population	1.073 (0.131)***	1.504 (0.202)***	0.462 (0.083)***	0.024 (0.196)
Percent Male Population	1.54 (0.681)**	1.667 (1.097)	0.194 (0.294)	-2.699 (1.308)**
Mask Mandate	-0.516 (0.226)**	-0.829 (0.515)	-0.099 (0.214)	1.009 (0.319)***
Mask Mandate × Vaccination	0.028 (0.015)*	0.067 (0.035)*	0.007 (0.014)	-0.058 (0.021)***
Republican – Male	0.175 (0.072)**	0.029 (0.051)	0.001 (0.028)	-0.151 (0.073)**
Democratic – Male	0.157 (0.075)**	-0.014 (-0.051)	-0.002 (0.017)	-0.231 (0.087)**
Republican – Female	0.382 (0.123)***	-0.115 (0.083)	-0.001 (0.035)	-0.038 (0.092)
Income	-0.656 (0.226)***	0.245 (0.420)	-0.270 (0.111)**	-0.650 (0.321)**
Race (White)	0.002 (0.281)	-0.338 (0.471)	-0.092 (0.124)	-0.859 (0.498)*
Race (White) × Income	0.455 (0.219)**	0.367 (0.319)	0.109 (0.092)	0.665 (0.317)**
Race (African American)	-0.111 (0.362)	0.225 (0.450)	-0.284 (0.138)**	0.262 (0.562)
Race (African American) × Income	0.393 (0.220)*	1.236 (0.293)***	0.168 (0.091)*	0.656 (0.364)*
Income × Vaccination	0.012 (0.008)	-0.052 (0.022)**	0.013 (0.004)***	0.008 (0.009)
Age	-0.272 (0.056)***	0.001 (0.080)	-0.207 (0.030)***	0.331 (0.102)***
Age × Vaccination	0.016 (0.004)***	0.001 (0.005)	0.014 (0.002)***	-0.018 (0.006)***
Observations	2,935	2,935	2,935	2,935
R-squared	0.981	0.880	0.998	0.967

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 11: Summary of Hypothesis Outcomes

	Hypotheses	Results Before Vaccination	Results After Vaccination
<i>H1a</i>	Vaccination positively affect pandemic customer success outcomes.	Cases- statistically supported (by Tests) Hospitalizations-statistically supported (by Cases) Deaths-statistically supported (by Cases)	Cases- statistically supported Hospitalizations-not statistically supported Deaths-not statistically supported
<i>H1b</i>	Mask Mandates moderate vaccination rate and pandemic customer success outcomes.	Cases-not statistically supported Hospitalizations-not statistically supported Deaths- statistically supported	Cases-not statistically supported Hospitalizations-not statistically supported Deaths-statistically supported
<i>H2a</i>	Political ideology affects pandemic customer success outcomes.	<u>Republican</u> Cases- not statistically supported Hospitalizations-statistically supported Deaths- statistically supported <u>Democratic</u> Cases- not statistically supported Hospitalizations-statistically supported Deaths- statistically supported	<u>Republican</u> Cases- statistically supported Hospitalizations-not statistically supported Deaths-not statistically supported <u>Democratic</u> Cases- statistically supported Hospitalizations-not statistically supported Deaths-statistically supported
<i>H2b</i>	Gender Moderates between political ideology and pandemic customer success outcomes.	<u>Male</u> Cases-not statistically supported Hospitalizations-statistically supported	<u>Male</u> Cases- statistically supported Hospitalizations-not statistically supported

		Deaths- statistically supported	Deaths-statistically supported
		<u>Female</u> Cases- not statistically supported	<u>Female</u> Cases- statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-statistically supported	Hospitalizations-not statistically supported
		Deaths-statistically supported	Deaths-not statistically supported
H3a	Race affects pandemic customer success outcomes.	<u>White</u> Cases-not statistically supported	<u>White</u> Cases-not statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-not statistically supported	Hospitalizations-not statistically supported
		Deaths-not statistically supported	Deaths-not statistically supported
		<u>Black</u> Cases-not statistically supported	<u>Black</u> Cases-not statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-not statistically supported	Hospitalizations-not statistically supported
		Deaths-not statistically supported	Deaths-not statistically supported
H3b	Income moderates race and pandemic customer success outcomes.	<u>White</u> Cases- statistically supported	<u>White</u> Cases- statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-statistically supported	Hospitalizations-not statistically supported
		Deaths- statistically supported	Deaths-statistically supported
		<u>Black</u> Cases- statistically supported	<u>Black</u> Cases-not statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-not statistically supported	

		Deaths-not statistically supported	Hospitalizations- statistically supported
			Deaths-not statistically supported
H4a	Income affects pandemic customer success outcomes.	Cases- statistically supported	Cases- statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-not statistically supported	Hospitalizations-statistically supported
		Deaths- not statistically supported	Deaths-statistically supported
H4b	Vaccination moderates income and pandemic customer success outcomes.	Cases- statistically supported	Cases-not statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-not statistically supported	Hospitalizations- statistically supported
		Deaths- not statistically supported	Deaths-not statistically supported
H5a	Age affects pandemic customer success outcomes.	Cases- statistically supported	Cases- statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-statistically supported	Hospitalizations-statistically supported
		Deaths- statistically supported	Deaths-statistically supported
H5b	Vaccination moderates age and pandemic customer success outcomes.	Cases- statistically supported	Cases- statistically supported
		Hospitalizations-statistically supported	Hospitalizations-statistically supported
		Deaths- statistically supported	Deaths-statistically supported

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Overview

According to the analysis, this empirical approach is focused on the government building relationships with its consumers. Long-term, this approach had an advantage with regard to the adoption of certain COVID-19 response strategies. In terms of the overall administration of vaccines, vaccines can have a positive impact, which can influence customer success outcomes during the pandemic. Within the period of January 2021 to February 2022, states with higher vaccination rates have lower cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. The results suggest that since COVID-19 vaccinations have been introduced and administered in the United States, there has been a significant decrease in cases. Thus, vaccinations are linked to the broader desire to protect people against disease by boosting immunity; better access to vaccines then leads to a reduction in cases. (Soares et al., 2021). It is important to examine the effectiveness of the vaccine and the results it produces along with the consumer's belief in its abilities, thus influencing the overall vaccination rate in each state.

There was a hope to establish a working view between vaccines and deaths, especially when having a consistent approach to controlling disease management. Hence, there is also a lower hospitalization rate, reflected in states with higher vaccination rates. Through the consistent use of the vaccine, the analysis results show that states with a higher vaccination rate have a lower death rate. (Kaplan et al., 2021). From a research point of view, vaccines have proved to provide the required protection against several vaccine-preventable diseases. COVID-19 is an excellent example of vaccines' relevance, which is relative to understanding the importance of vaccines because they played a successful role in helping protect against the virus.

Masks are essential, especially in understanding the negative impacts of the COVID-19 from a solution point of view. Before vaccinations were administered, mask-wearing policies were implemented. States with mask mandates have higher case and death rates. The reason for this positive coefficient could be that of a reverse relationship. The states that had higher death rates then kept the mask mandate created a positive relationship because of these inverse relationships. The hypothetical approach established here is broad, especially with mask mandates, understanding how they are associated with the pandemic customer success outcomes. After vaccines were administered in the United States, within the period January 2021 to February 2022, states with mask mandates had a lower case rate along with higher hospitalization and death rates. However, through an additional interaction with vaccination, states with mask mandates have higher case, hospitalization, and death rates. The same previous analogy applies in which the states that had higher rates in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, then decided to keep the mask mandates and increase vaccination rates. In light of our findings, we urge a closer look at the implementation of mask mandates, both psychologically and in terms of disease control.

Politics and political figures have a different impact, which is generally distinct in ensuring that any outcome is addressed, especially in addressing the desired pandemic customer success outcomes. In the analysis of the results, it becomes clear that politicians and politics are significantly associated with how vaccines and other policies are perceived and implemented. (Soares et al., 2021). Thus, these findings highlight the importance of examining the governor parties, such as the Republican Party, and how they are associated with high death rates. The most immediate discussion here is the politicians and their groupings' influence, which is essential in making their response strategies effective or not. The analysis of the results indicates

how influential the political leaders are, especially in encouraging or discouraging people from taking the vaccines in relation to party loyalty impacts the results.

The relationship between genders creates a different view in understanding the impact of political ideology, especially in shaping the relationship between vaccination rates among male and female governors in general. When examining the interaction effects of governor party and governor gender before vaccine administration, states with Republican male governors seem to have higher death rates than any other interaction, such as states with Republic female governors or Democratic male governors. Since we used Democratic female governors as the reference category, the results indicate that both states with Republican female governors and Democratic male governors have a lower death rate. As expected, after vaccination, within the period of January 2021 to February 2022, all of the interaction effects between the governor party and governor gender had a significantly lower death rate in their state. Therefore, the result explains that the governors can establish a case that will influence an efficient outcome, but the relationship is not always significant. For instance, Female US governors dealt with COVID 19 pandemics more aggressively and efficiently, reducing their citizens' exposure to the pandemic effects. Overall, states with female governors were fast movers in implementing measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. (Riggs & Catalano 2020; Sergeant & Stajkovic 2020). It is important to also take into consideration how these state governors' affiliations, either politics-based or gender-based, are unevenly distributed amongst states (see Table 12 below). There is an appeal to further examine the ideology established by the political parties concerning the intake of vaccines from a decision-making point of view.

Table 12: Distribution of US Governors by Number of States

	Female	Male
Republican	3	25
Democrat	6	16

The race of the citizens in each state played a role in understanding the intake of vaccines and their accessibility to understand the existing differences in the medical field that need to have that difference in application. The results show that race overall was not significantly associated with cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Before vaccines were administered, the White race experienced a lower case rate and higher hospitalization rate, while African Americans experienced a higher case rate and lower hospitalization rate. After vaccines were administered in the United States, within the period January 2021 to February 2022, surprisingly, the cases and hospitalization rates switched in their direction; the White race experienced a higher case rate and lower hospitalization rate, while African Americans experienced a lower case rate and higher hospitalization rate. The association between the White and African American populations with deaths is different, as expected, bringing variance in analysis, especially on the number of deaths that occurred. The results suggest that the White race experienced fewer deaths than African Americans before and after vaccination. The results attained from this analysis also entail the treatment of races in different areas, which might encourage vaccine intake; when either race is poorly treated or discriminated against, there will be boycotts.

The income of each citizen plays a different understanding of the pandemic customer success outcomes, making it different from creating a unique solution to the required ability to address the impacts of the virus. Between January 2021 and February 2022, the moderating effect of income on cases and hospitalizations was very significant. Hence, this means a different view of the income and how the virus is addressed. The ability of the people to fund their health needs and create a difference in access to healthcare has been able to affect the number of deaths which is different in creating a view for control. Therefore, the higher the income, the lower the number of deaths, exposing the access disparity. When vaccines were incorporated, hospitalizations were reduced. Considerably, pandemic control brings out a different approach to the set ways of regulation, making a difference in the intake of vaccines and reducing the number of cases announced. The analysis of the results from the income is associated with the set ways of analysis, especially from the results in understanding the informed levels and abilities individuals have in vaccine intake.

The relationship between race and the hospitalization rates and the broader issue with vaccination is unique because of the opportunities established as a result of racial composition. Therefore, a functional approach, especially in the treatment, makes it easy for the races to generate opportunities, hence bringing down the cases or making them reliably important in addressing vaccine disparity. In addition, access to health is meant to create a view of the racial composition, hence reducing hospitalization cases in some parts. The results show that between the period January 2021 and February 2022, the White race experienced higher case and death rates while African Americans experienced higher hospitalization rates. The main reason is that not all places' people were discriminated against, and if they were, then all the races experienced the challenge, making the results valueless.

The pandemic outcomes indicated that age has a significant role, especially in disease management. (Li et al., 2021). In addition, in the previous analysis of the various periods like before vaccine administration, the number of cases significantly affected the existing death and hospitalization cases analysis, as shown in Table 9. Before vaccinations were administered in the United States, age had a significant impact on pandemic customer success outcomes. The relationship between age with cases, hospitalizations, and deaths was significant; automatically, the desired outcome was reached from an impact standpoint. States with higher average age had a higher death rate. An increase in age by any unit automatically causes an impact on the ability of the vaccine and the income abilities that should be applied from impact ability. After vaccines were administered in the United States, within the period of January 2021 to February 2022, states with higher average age and vaccination rates combined had a lower hospitalization rate and a higher death rate. The physical abilities that come along with age have been able to reflect the results because of the reduced hospitalization rates from the impact of the vaccines, especially from the body's ability to cope. So, consideration must be given to the age of the patient, reducing cases, and especially creating a survival strategy with the vaccine. For example, even a young person who experiences mild symptoms of COVID-19 and gets better may benefit from the vaccine.

Overall, as each state in the United States is unique, it provides a testament to customer success in that every individual customer is unique. Each customer's goals are different, just like each state's goals are different. Not every strategy works for every state. By the strategy of a collaborative relationship between a governor and their citizens, it should provide the opportunities to achieve the desired outcomes for both parties. This empirical analysis showcases a baseline for how customer success can be applied in real-world scenarios.

Counterintuitive Insights

Although most of the results were expected, there were some that were interesting to discover. Vaccinations at the beginning of administration were not as significant for the pandemic customer success outcomes. It was expected that states with a higher vaccination rate would have a lower case, hospitalization, or death rate. However, it was surprising that only cases had a significantly lower rate. The results produced from analyzing a state governor's party and gender affiliation were quite interesting. However, the results also suggest that all interactions (Republican Male, Democratic Male, and Republican Female Governors) have lower deaths in their state than Democratic Female Governors in states such as New York. Especially for cases like New York, the current governor Kathy Hochul assumed her role in August 2021, in the midst of the pandemic (National Governor's Association, n.d.). Before that, Andrew Cuomo, a Democratic male governor, was in control of the state closer to the start of the pandemic. As each state governor's strategies are different, it can contribute to how effective they are in achieving pandemic customer success outcomes.

Limitations

Theoretically, the limitations of our study may suggest further research. There may be unaccounted measures that analyze the theoretical foundations of customer success. First, customer success is a relatively new academic construct. There are still many more theoretical bases to discover and expand. Second, the theoretical base of customer success is limited through solely foundational premises. There are more aspects to a theoretical foundation that could be added to the study in further research. Third, the study lacks causal inferences. Fourth, there is a lack of specific focus on firm trust. With customer success, customers share data with the firm,

which means they would need to trust the firm. Fifth, the practical examples to demonstrate customer success are limited to three common market scenarios. Sixth, thus, customer success may be easier to monitor in a B2B market scenario. Seventh, the theoretical foundation was limited to one theoretical framework (Reverse Logic Framework).

Empirically, the limitations of our study may suggest further research. There may be unaccounted variables that could affect COVID-19 customer success outcomes (cases, hospitalizations, and deaths). First, the research analyzed one scenario, which was G2C (Government-to-Consumer). There are more marketing scenarios that can be utilized to demonstrate the theoretical effectiveness of customer success. Second, the current analysis is limited to a few variables where there may be other predictor variables such as job types, employment status, healthcare types, etc. Third, the study is limited to only two categories of gender (governor), male and female, and two categories of race, White and African American (Black). Fourth, also, the outcome variables are limited where there may be other variables such as GDP to analyze the economic effectiveness of each state. Fifth, there is a lack of industry variety; the study is limited to the healthcare industry. Sixth, the analysis was also limited to examining only the United States. Seventh, the timeframe of the analysis was limited to 24 months. We account support for this analysis by ensuring that a significant pattern was shown that affected customer success outcomes. However, there could be other analytic methods that may explain the effectiveness of customer success strategies that we were not able to incorporate in our analysis.

Overall, as these limitations are minor to the effectiveness of the current study, they exist nonetheless. The particular methods used for this study fit and fulfilled its purpose. As a single study cannot incorporate every aspect into the research, there lie more opportunities to explore

the research area. These limitations can lay the groundwork for future research and provide the opportunity to expand the construct of customer success. There also may be more opportunities to empirically demonstrate customer success for maximum comprehension by the researcher/practitioner. Both theoretically and empirically, customer success can be viewed as a very useful construct in marketing.

Future Research

This research represents an initial step in better understanding the effectiveness of customer success as a marketing construct. First, as customer success is a relatively new academic construct, there is more opportunity to expand its theoretical basis. Propositions could be added to propel the theoretical foundation forward and add to its validity. As one theoretical framework was used to establish the initial theoretical foundation of customer success, future research can explore other theories that can add to the validity of the initial base framework. Future research could add possible causal inferences for customer success. As there were three common market scenarios utilized as examples and one used for empirical analysis, the other two marketing scenarios (B2C and B2B) could be analyzed in future research. To expand the practical effectiveness of customer success within marketing scenarios, even more marketing scenarios could be utilized, such as B2G (Business-to-Government).

An interesting question that stems from our findings is the true impact on customer success outcomes, especially in a G2C marketing scenario using COVID-19 as an example. There are so many factors that affect COVID-19 customer success outcomes (cases, hospitalizations, and deaths) that it would take several studies to cover them all. Future research could analyze the type of job that the citizens have, the employment status of the citizens, and

the type of healthcare that the citizens possess. In future analysis, when incorporating gender, there could be a third category added to represent the many other current facets of gender, especially in government. Other than cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, GDP could be analyzed in future research as an outcome variable. GDP is a great measure of economic effectiveness, so it would be a valuable asset in future customer success studies. As this research focuses on the United States, future research could focus on the top national countries in the world and compare their COVID-19 strategies to analyze its effect on customer success outcomes. A longitudinal study would enhance this research and provide even more insight into which factors are truly and significantly impacting COVID-19 customer success outcomes. Furthermore, other methods of analysis can be used, such as a time-series analysis or Structural Equation Modeling could be used in future research to enhance the empirical analysis of the customer success marketing scenario.

Finally, while our justification for the effectiveness of customer success as a marketing construct is rooted in theory (Reverse Logic Framework) and supported by data from a G2C empirical analysis, future research can provide the opportunity to expand the theoretical foundation that has been established. As the study was limited by several factors, future research can explore the factors unaccounted for. Again, as the academic construct of customer success is relatively new, future research can expand and build upon our initial theoretical foundation. Additionally, COVID-19 affected the entire world, not just the United States, so future research could examine its impact on a large scale.

Theoretical Contributions

This research provides many important theoretical contributions. First, we more precisely introduce and describe the construct of customer success in a more systematic manner that could be used for future research development as well as managerial application. While the constructs of customer satisfaction and customer delight have had remarkable acceptance and advantages over several decades, important limitations have also been identified. Constructs such as customer success have been introduced by practitioners to overcome some of these limitations, but it has not been clearly defined from a theoretical perspective to further facilitate academic research and widespread practitioner application. While practitioners such as Nardelli (Welch and Byrne, 2001; Peters, 2003; Brown et al., 2011) and Salesforce.com have demonstrated astounding success while using the construct, the construct has loosely and imprecisely been defined by academic and trade associations (e.g., Customer Success Association). This has resulted in the relative growth of both theoretical development and practitioner application. This research, by clearly defining and describing customer success, may help to overcome these limitations.

To accomplish this objective, the dissertation gives an apt definition of customer success because both academic scholars and practitioners have provided loose descriptions of this concept in their past standpoints. Given the possible originator of this construct, Robert Nardelli showcased the efficiency of customer construct; however, he did not offer the best definition from an academic basis. This calls for immediate action, so a more concrete definition is offered. In addition, as much as academic scholars have used this concept in the past few research, it has not been clearly defined. It appears not absolutely to represent the affirmative construct that Nardelli established.

Moreover, by applying the Indigenous theory by Hunt (2015, 2020), through the realistic inductive approach, the research creates an initial goal-relative rigorous theoretical basis that can be used as the starting point for further study of customer success. This approach offers a clarification of how we have established the current body of knowledge and how to develop it. The research gives a detailed step-by-step explanation of the seven steps of the IR model, all of which are used to explain the construct of customer success.

This research's initial theoretical foundation explains customer success by including ideas that Hunt (2015) proposed through the strategic marketing theory. The study identifies the practicality of Hunt's ideas by concentrating on scientific realism, truth, and qualitative methods in research and experimental tests. The research then applies Hunt's theory to showcase the practicality of this construct in actual scenarios for both academics and practitioners. This study can be used to understand better customer success which can lead to further research in the marketing theory, ethics, competition, Macro marketing, and scientific philosophy. The research further fulfills customer success by prioritizing their demands and business growth. This dissertation further substantiates the initial framework through the various foundational premises that illustrate the effects of every premise on businesses and customers. For example, co-creation is a foundational premise that maximizes profits for companies and improves customer engagement. Additionally, customer-centricity leads to improved business performance and increased commitment for companies and customers. At the same time, objectivity creates an accurate measurement of customers' desires and long sustainability.

Through the developed theoretical framework, an understanding of these premises is established, and every step is outlined. The first step, thus, is to formulate the proposition. Afterward, the problem is defined to identify whether it is valuable to solve and invest time.

Next, one defines the problem they need to solve as they thoughtfully evaluate what might differentiate them from the other study being carried out in a similar area. Upon evaluation, one must measure how the theory is relevant in the field and apply it to engaging various critics to ascertain the theory, which helps improve the efficiency of the theory.

Practical Implications

The second area that this dissertation contributes to is the managerial/practical applications. The major question is how best this body of knowledge can be practically used in academia and the business world. Over the past years, with the increment of marketplace competition, it was more visible that constructs like customer delight and satisfaction were valuable; they were not adequate to retain the existing customers and acquire new ones. The study on customer success constructs may be valuable in filling the gaps in marketing practices. Customer success is a goal, a mathematical-based tool that could be customized to meet the desired customer results.

A practical implication for the construct of customer success is evident in the critical role in transforming GE Power Systems to become the most profitable sub-division of General Electric when it was applied and maybe in the entire history of General Electric. Additionally, it can be used readily in G2C, B2B, and B2C markets. Through the thorough analysis of secondary data, the research has elicited the various foundational principles to understand the driving forces of customer success. For instance, of the principles is value, which helps firms better understand what their customers value most in their consumer experience.

The study offers firms a true understanding of their customers on a detailed level to efficiently deliver valuable goods and services to their customers. When a company can match

the desired features to customer demands, it is guaranteed the most effectiveness in the competing market. With the traditional CRM models, companies are most likely to guess what value is for their consumers. Sufficient customer success implies that companies will have a higher probability of guaranteeing value for their customers. This research creates a platform for firms' managers to understand that customer success can help them determine whether their customers are successfully using their services and products. This construct of customer success also helps companies recognize the possible impending risks and warnings when customers do not make the desired progress. Customer success offers a positive value to the investments that the customers and companies make that typically care for the progress of customers based on their personal goals. With no significant value in a business based on services and products offered to consumers, consumer success becomes an unachieved wish for firms.

This dissertation offers valuable insight into one of the most significant businesses in social scenarios of the past century, the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that with little certainty that other than COVID-19, other pandemics will show themselves in the future with more effects and frequencies, based on the findings of Sandler (2021); Smithum and Glassman (2021). This research provides insightful information that may be valuable in the future to handle such pandemics from social and business standpoints. This can be based on the various hypotheses that have been tested and proved by the analytical results presented in the above tables. The results show the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on various aspects of customer success that are most likely to affect their performances in the business world. Therefore, this study contributes significantly and makes an important tool for marketing for the social well-being of both customers and companies and a major consideration in the current marketing efforts.

Conclusion

This research makes several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this dissertation presents an initial theoretical framework for the important construct of customer success. In order to do so, customer success was precisely defined as both practitioners and academics have often loosely described it in the past. Further, using Hunt's (2015, 2020) indigenous theory, inductive realist approach, a relatively rigorous theoretical foundation was created to serve as a starting point for further research in customer success. Practically, over the years, as marketplace competition kept increasing, it was more and more evident that constructs such as customer satisfaction and customer delight, while useful, were not adequate for retaining existing customers and acquiring new ones. The construct of customer success may help to fill these gaps in the practice of marketing.

Additionally, this dissertation may provide valuable insights into one of the most important social events of this century, the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in light of the findings, as expected, states with higher vaccination had a lower case, hospitalization, and death rates. As each state's government has its own unique demographic profile and strategy, customer success could assist in helping them implement the strategies that will work for them and achieve the desired outcomes for that state. In the future, this dissertation may provide business and social insights that may be useful in managing pandemics. Without question, considerable research is needed before the full potential for customer success can be realized. Additional research is essential, for example, to compare the construct of customer success with the construct of customer satisfaction and customer delight in different conception situations and markets. Nonetheless, this study provides a critical step in the direction of both theoretical and

practical customer success research that could have a tremendous impact on relationship marketing going forward.

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Appendix A

Table I. Citations of Top Ten Articles Published in the *Journal of Marketing*.

Authors	Title	Citation Counts	
		From WOS	From GS
Morgan and Hunt (1994)	The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing	7,213	26,150
Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985)	A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research	5,779	28,886
Zeithaml (1988)	Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence	4,960	19,926
Vargo and Lusch (2004)	Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing	4,885	14,721
Keller (1993)	Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity	4,099	18,070
Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996)	The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality	3,732	13,364
Narver and Slater (1990)	The Effect of Market Orientation on Business Profitability	3,304	12,336
Cronin and Taylor (1992)	Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination and Extension	3,215	16,350
Kohli and Jaworski (1990)	Market Orientation: The Construct, Research Propositions, and Managerial Implications	3,204	11,616
Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987)	Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships	3,150	12,949

Notes: Articles in bold employ a TIU approach. WOS = Web of Science Index; GS = Google Scholar. Citation counts gathered on October 4, 2019.

(c.f., Zeithaml, et al., 2020)