Personal Reflection

When I first started this dissertation, I had one goal to accomplish: to create something that could help individuals that have the capital to invest but do not understand finances. I had an idea to develop a mechanism that would allow anyone, regardless of whether they had any expertise in either markets or finance, to utilize data for guidance and insights about their decisions. That notion of accessibility was grounded in my mind at the outset of the project and never left it. However, the project evolved into so much more than I could have imagined in the early stages.

As I progressed and encountered issues with data connections, I understood that it became far more than merely connecting sentiment to financial KPIs. It became an expedition of learning new technologies, frameworks, and mindsets; I learned how to use Python for data collection and modelling data. I learned how to handle financial datasets and processed missing values. I learned to experiment with new techniques including VADER and FinBERT for sentiment analysis. In each step, I found new obstacles to negotiate - whether aligning financial data and sentiment data across time, smoothing out volatility, or testing logistic regression when my results did not match my expectation. Sometimes, these experiences felt like failures, but they also prompted me to think critically, be adaptive and to persevere. I can say I have built resilience to fickleness, as well as patience to try and try again until I tested an approach that produced coherent results. Designing the dashboard in Power BI was another crucial tipping point. For the initial interface, I was expecting something far simpler as I gradually learned about visualization techniques and began to see the potential and power of having an interactive BI tool. I was able to visualize complex outputs into something that provided value, in terms of clear, interpretable insights. The ability to transform a series of raw statistics into meaningful information using the cards, slicers, line charts, heat maps and gauges all of this was what I had envisioned; An experience in which non-financial users were able to click through and visibly discern not only the key risk signals but shifts in sentiment and price with absolutely no knowledge of the technical mechanisms behind it.

Beyond the technical component of this project, it contributed to my overall thinking regarding research and my development. I realized that my whole dissertation was not only about output, but also about displaying process, transparency and the application of theory. By linking my findings to EMH, Behavioural Finance, and Information Asymmetry I was able to understand how academic concepts could be applied and then subsequently evaluated. I also learned that models do not have to be perfect, and that while data may offer modest results, they can mean something if data is interpreted truthfully and clearly.

Looking ahead, I feel that this work can evolve with plenty of runway. The dashboard component is only the first step. There are entry points around social media sentiment, ESG data, and beyond logistic regression, more sophisticated models. More importantly, the method of thinking that I adopted throughout this project around accessibility, resilience in the face of setbacks and continuous development will stick with me.

To conclude, the dissertation was not just an academic requirement. It became a journey to build something meaningful, to learn some technical and analytical skills and understand how data can be made accessible to all of us. My original aim of assisting non-financial people persists, but it became clear to me, that the project also guided me into becoming someone who is more capable and adaptable, and now better positioned for whatever comes next.