**Capstone Project** Theo Lekkas

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**Definition**

**Project Overview**

In this project I look to determine whether or not the Relative Strength Index (RSI) is an effective tool for buying & selling stocks. First I begin with a definition of the RSI:

“The relative strength index (RSI) is a technical momentum indicator that compares the magnitude of recent gains to recent losses in an attempt to determine overbought and oversold conditions of an asset.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The RSI is supposed to be able to determine both good buy & sell points for stocks (it is also used in trading futures, but I will restrict my analysis to stocks for this project.) The purpose of this project is to determine whether or not buying a stock when it’s oversold & then selling the stock when it’s overbought is a profitable strategy. Below, I will more clearly state the parameters of this problem & further clarify various definitions.

**Problem Statement**

This project intends to determine whether a trading strategy of going long (buying) a stock when it is considered oversold using the RSI is a viable (profitable) strategy. Profitability, however, is not enough for a viable strategy. We will also want a comparison against some benchmark; the reason for this is to determine whether or not it was better to simply invest in the broader market rather than deploying a specific trading/investing strategy. For this project I will use the returns to the S&P 500 over the time period used for this strategy. There are other more sophisticated metrics that look at the volatility of the strategy (such as Sharpe ratios), but for two reasons I will not be looking at these: 1) for the purposes of this project I am only interested whether or not RSI is really predictive and nominally better than the broader market 2) I don’t much care about volatility, to quote Warren Buffet “I would much rather earn a lumpy 15% over time than a smooth 12%.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

The buy signal for a stock will be when the RSI indicates an oversold threshold has been reached & the sell signal will be when the RSI indicates an overbought threshold has been reached. I will use adjusted daily prices. Both the purchases & sales will be made on the adjusted closing price. In the initial attempt I will not consider commissions, slippage, or other market frictions; these can be added later if the strategy actually seems viable. Furthermore, I will also look at various moving averages, which the RSI is dependent upon. I will also look at different levels of oversold & overbought (these will become clearer below when the RSI formula is broken down.)

I will use two different machine learning models, linear regression & decision trees, to see if there is predictive value to this strategy.

Below I will more clearly define RSI and various elements/concepts that will be used throughout the project.

**Metrics**

The RSI is a momentum indicator that attempts to determine short-term bullish (positive) & bearish (negative) positions for stocks. The RSI looks at the price action of a stock and does not consider other elements (such as sentiment, news, accounting metrics, etc.) The RSI is a pure “technical” indicator, its only concerned with the price movement of the instrument being analyzed.

The formula for the RSI is as follows:



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As can be interpreted from the formula above, the RSI is an index between 0 & 100.

The RS is the relative strength metric, it is defined as average of up days over n periods divided by the average of down days over n periods. There are a couple of ways to calculate the averages; smoothed moving average[[3]](#footnote-3) or exponential moving average[[4]](#footnote-4). Below is formula for the RS using a smoothed average:



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The U & D in the above formula represent ‘Up’ & ‘Down’ which are calculated by subtracting the current close with the previous days close[[5]](#footnote-5).

Finally, we need to define the meaning of Oversold & Overbought. These are somewhat arbitrary, but for the initial runs I will use the traditional definitions. Oversold on the RSI is < 30 and Overbought > 70. These two definitions are definitely ripe for fine-tuning, but we will use the traditional definitions at first.

**Analysis**

**Data Exploration**

The data set used is taken from the Quandl WIKI data[[6]](#footnote-6). This is a community curated set of 3179 stocks (as of 06/08/2016, the date the data set used was downloaded.) The data set consists of the entire price history of the stocks included in the WIKI data set. The price history includes the open, high, low, & close as well as adjusted prices (adjusted prices take into account stock splits & dividends and update the historical prices in order to have continuous prices where there are no large changes to prices that had nothing to do with daily changes.) The data also includes the ticker symbol, the date, and the volume (as well as adjusted volume.)

The subset of data used consists of the adjusted price/volume data, the ticker symbol, and the date.

**Exploratory Visualization**

**Algorithms and Techniques**

**Benchmark**

**Methodology**

**Data Preprocessing**

**Implementation**

**Refinement**

**Results**

**Model Evaluation and Validation**

**Justification**

**Conclusion**

**Free-Form Visualization**

**Reflection**

**Improvement**

1. Relative Strength Index - RSI <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/rsi.asp> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1996 Chairman's Letter - <http://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/1996.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moving\_average - Simple\_moving\_average](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moving_average#Simple_moving_average) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moving\_average - Exponential\_moving\_average](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moving_average#Exponential_moving_average) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relative\_strength\_index - Calculation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relative_strength_index#Calculation) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Quandl WIKI data: <https://www.quandl.com/data/WIKI> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)