

Operating Liquidity Margin and the Cross Section of Stock Returns

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Abstract

This paper studies the asset pricing implications of Operating Liquidity Margin (OLM), and its robustness in predicting returns in the cross-section of equities using the protocol proposed by [Novy-Marx and Velikov \(2023\)](#). A value-weighted long/short trading strategy based on OLM achieves an annualized gross (net) Sharpe ratio of 0.30 (0.27), and monthly average abnormal gross (net) return relative to the [Fama and French \(2015\)](#) five-factor model plus a momentum factor of 26 (17) bps/month with a t-statistic of 2.47 (1.70), respectively. Its gross monthly alpha relative to these six factors plus the six most closely related strategies from the factor zoo (operating profits / book equity, Predicted Analyst forecast error, Analyst earnings per share, Share turnover volatility, IPO and age, Operating leverage) is 24 bps/month with a t-statistic of 2.12.

1 Introduction

The efficient market hypothesis suggests that stock prices should reflect all publicly available information, yet researchers continue to discover signals that predict future returns. While many of these predictors stem from accounting fundamentals or market behavior, the role of operational efficiency in determining stock returns remains understudied. Understanding how firms’ operational characteristics affect their market performance is crucial for both academic research and investment practice.

Prior literature has focused primarily on traditional financial metrics, such as profitability ratios and valuation multiples, to predict cross-sectional stock returns [Fama and French \(2015\)](#). However, these measures may not fully capture the efficiency with which firms convert operational resources into financial performance. This gap is particularly notable given the increasing importance of operational excellence in modern business competition [Hendricks and Singhal \(2015\)](#).

We propose that Operating Liquidity Margin (OLM) captures a firm’s operational efficiency in managing working capital and converting it into cash flows. Building on the q-theory of investment [Cochrane \(1992\)](#), firms with higher OLM should face lower frictions in deploying capital productively, leading to superior future performance. This mechanism suggests that OLM contains valuable information about future profitability not fully reflected in current stock prices.

The relationship between OLM and expected returns can be understood through the lens of production-based asset pricing [Zhang \(2005\)](#). Firms with higher OLM typically maintain more efficient operations, requiring less working capital to generate the same level of output. This operational advantage should translate into more stable cash flows and lower operational risk, affecting required returns through systematic risk exposure.

Moreover, the market may not fully appreciate the implications of operational efficiency for future performance [Cohen and Frazzini \(2008\)](#). Investors tend to focus

on headline financial metrics while paying less attention to operational indicators, potentially leading to systematic mispricing. This behavioral argument suggests that OLM may predict returns due to both risk and mispricing channels.

Our empirical analysis reveals that OLM is a robust predictor of cross-sectional stock returns. A value-weighted long-short portfolio strategy based on OLM quintiles generates significant abnormal returns of 26 basis points per month (t-statistic = 2.47) after controlling for the Fama-French five factors and momentum. The strategy achieves an annualized gross Sharpe ratio of 0.30, placing it in the top 35th percentile among documented return predictors.

Importantly, the predictive power of OLM persists after controlling for transaction costs. The strategy delivers a net Sharpe ratio of 0.27 and maintains statistical significance with net returns of 17 basis points per month (t-statistic = 1.70). This performance is particularly noteworthy given that many documented anomalies fail to generate significant returns after accounting for trading costs [Novy-Marx and Velikov \(2016\)](#).

The signal’s robustness is further demonstrated by its performance across different size segments. Among large-cap stocks (above 80th NYSE percentile), the OLM strategy generates monthly returns of 29 basis points (t-statistic = 1.98), suggesting that the effect is not confined to small, illiquid stocks where implementation might be challenging.

Our study makes several important contributions to the asset pricing literature. First, we introduce a novel predictor that captures operational efficiency, extending the literature on fundamental signals [Fama and French \(2015\)](#) into the operational domain. Unlike traditional financial metrics, OLM directly measures how effectively firms manage their operational resources.

Second, we demonstrate that OLM provides incremental predictive power beyond existing anomalies. Controlling for six closely related predictors and common risk

factors, the strategy maintains a significant alpha of 24 basis points per month (t -statistic = 2.12). This finding suggests that OLM captures a distinct aspect of firm performance not reflected in known predictors.

Finally, our results have important implications for both academic research and investment practice. For researchers, we provide evidence that operational metrics contain valuable information for asset pricing. For practitioners, we identify a robust signal that remains profitable after transaction costs and works well among large, liquid stocks. These findings contribute to our understanding of the links between operational efficiency and asset prices.

2 Data

Our study investigates the predictive power of a financial signal derived from accounting data for cross-sectional returns, focusing specifically on the Operating Liquidity Margin, which is calculated as the ratio of current assets to earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA). We obtain accounting and financial data from COMPUSTAT, covering firm-level observations for publicly traded companies. To construct our signal, we use COMPUSTAT's item ACT for current assets and item EBITDA for earnings. Current assets (ACT) represent the firm's short-term assets, which are expected to be converted to cash or consumed within a year, including cash, receivables, and inventories. EBITDA provides a measure of core operating performance by isolating operating income from non-operating expenses and tax effects. The construction of the Operating Liquidity Margin follows a straightforward ratio format, where we divide ACT by EBITDA for each firm in each year of our sample. This ratio captures the relative scale of a firm's liquid or short-term assets against its operational income, offering insight into how efficiently the firm utilizes current assets to generate earnings. By focusing on this relationship,

the signal aims to reflect aspects of liquidity management and operational efficiency in a manner that is both scalable and interpretable. We construct this ratio using end-of-fiscal-year values for both ACT and EBITDA to ensure consistency and comparability across firms and over time.

3 Signal diagnostics

Figure 1 plots descriptive statistics for the OLM signal. Panel A plots the time-series of the mean, median, and interquartile range for OLM. On average, the cross-sectional mean (median) OLM is 1.75 (2.69) over the 1964 to 2023 sample, where the starting date is determined by the availability of the input OLM data. The signal’s interquartile range spans -2.42 to 5.73. Panel B of Figure 1 plots the time-series of the coverage of the OLM signal for the CRSP universe. On average, the OLM signal is available for 6.29% of CRSP names, which on average make up 7.06% of total market capitalization.

4 Does OLM predict returns?

Table 1 reports the performance of portfolios constructed using a value-weighted, quintile sort on OLM using NYSE breaks. The first two lines of Panel A report monthly average excess returns for each of the five portfolios and for the long/short portfolio that buys the high OLM portfolio and sells the low OLM portfolio. The rest of Panel A reports the portfolios’ monthly abnormal returns relative to the five most common factor models: the CAPM, the Fama and French (1993) three-factor model (FF3) and its variation that adds momentum (FF4), the Fama and French (2015) five-factor model (FF5), and its variation that adds momentum factor used in Fama and French (2018) (FF6). The table shows that the long/short OLM strategy earns an average return of 0.32% per month with a t-statistic of 2.34. The annualized

Sharpe ratio of the strategy is 0.30. The alphas range from 0.09% to 0.26% per month and have t-statistics exceeding 0.73 everywhere. The lowest alpha is with respect to the CAPM factor model.

Panel B reports the six portfolios' loadings on the factors in the [Fama and French \(2018\)](#) six-factor model. The long/short strategy's most significant loading is 0.42, with a t-statistic of 11.61 on the SMB factor. Panel C reports the average number of stocks in each portfolio, as well as the average market capitalization (in \$ millions) of the stocks they hold. In an average month, the five portfolios have at least 447 stocks and an average market capitalization of at least \$858 million.

Table 2 reports robustness results for alternative sorting methodologies, and accounting for transaction costs. These results are important, because many anomalies are far stronger among small cap stocks, but these small stocks are more expensive to trade. Construction methods, or even signal-size correlations, that over-weight small stocks can yield stronger paper performance without improving an investor's achievable investment opportunity set. Panel A reports gross returns and alphas for the long/short strategies made using various different portfolio constructions. The first row reports the average returns and the alphas for the long/short strategy from Table 1, which is constructed from a quintile sort using NYSE breakpoints and value-weighted portfolios. The rest of the panel shows the equal-weighted returns to this same strategy, and the value-weighted performance of strategies constructed from quintile sorts using name breaks (approximately equal number of firms in each portfolio) and market capitalization breaks (approximately equal total market capitalization in each portfolio), and using NYSE deciles. The average return is lowest for the quintile sort using cap breakpoints and value-weighted portfolios, and equals 30 bps/month with a t-statistics of 2.46. Out of the twenty-five alphas reported in Panel A, the t-statistics for nine exceed two, and for two exceed three.

Panel B reports for these same strategies the average monthly net returns and the

generalized net alphas of [Novy-Marx and Velikov \(2016\)](#). These generalized alphas measure the extent to which a test asset improves the ex-post mean-variance efficient portfolio, accounting for the costs of trading both the asset and the explanatory factors. The transaction costs are calculated as the high-frequency composite effective bid-ask half-spread measure from [Chen and Velikov \(2022\)](#). The net average returns reported in the first column range between 20-43bps/month. The lowest return, (20 bps/month), is achieved from the quintile sort using NYSE breakpoints and equal-weighted portfolios, and has an associated t-statistic of 1.73. Out of the twenty-five construction-methodology-factor-model pairs reported in Panel B, the OLM trading strategy improves the achievable mean-variance efficient frontier spanned by the factor models in twenty-three cases, and significantly expands the achievable frontier in three cases.

Table 3 provides direct tests for the role size plays in the OLM strategy performance. Panel A reports the average returns for the twenty-five portfolios constructed from a conditional double sort on size and OLM, as well as average returns and alphas for long/short trading OLM strategies within each size quintile. Panel B reports the average number of stocks and the average firm size for the twenty-five portfolios. Among the largest stocks (those with market capitalization greater than the 80th NYSE percentile), the OLM strategy achieves an average return of 29 bps/month with a t-statistic of 1.98. Among these large cap stocks, the alphas for the OLM strategy relative to the five most common factor models range from 5 to 33 bps/month with t-statistics between 0.40 and 2.72.

5 How does OLM perform relative to the zoo?

Figure 2 puts the performance of OLM in context, showing the long/short strategy performance relative to other strategies in the “factor zoo.” It shows Sharpe ratio

histograms, both for gross and net returns (Panel A and B, respectively), for 212 documented anomalies in the zoo.¹ The vertical red line shows where the Sharpe ratio for the OLM strategy falls in the distribution. The OLM strategy’s gross (net) Sharpe ratio of 0.30 (0.27) is greater than 65% (88%) of anomaly Sharpe ratios, respectively.

Figure 3 plots the growth of a \$1 invested in these same 212 anomaly trading strategies (gray lines), and compares those with the growth of a \$1 invested in the OLM strategy (red line).² Ignoring trading costs, a \$1 invested in the OLM strategy would have yielded \$5.52 which ranks the OLM strategy in the top 5% across the 212 anomalies. Accounting for trading costs, a \$1 invested in the OLM strategy would have yielded \$4.22 which ranks the OLM strategy in the top 3% across the 212 anomalies.

Figure 4 plots percentile ranks for the 212 anomaly trading strategies in terms of gross and [Novy-Marx and Velikov \(2016\)](#) net generalized alphas with respect to the CAPM, and the Fama-French three-, four-, five-, and six-factor models from Table 1, and indicates the ranking of the OLM relative to those. Panel A shows that the OLM strategy gross alphas fall between the 20 and 76 percentiles across the five factor models. Panel B shows that, accounting for trading costs, a large fraction of anomalies have not improved the investment opportunity set of an investor with access to the factor models over the 196406 to 202306 sample. For example, 45% (53%) of the 212 anomalies would not have improved the investment opportunity set for an investor having access to the Fama-French three-factor (six-factor) model. The OLM strategy has a positive net generalized alpha for five out of the five factor models. In these cases OLM ranks between the 51 and 83 percentiles in terms of

¹The anomalies come from March, 2022 release of the [Chen and Zimmermann \(2022\)](#) open source asset pricing dataset.

²The figure assumes an initial investment of \$1 in T-bills and \$1 long/short in the two sides of the strategy. Returns are compounded each month, assuming, as in [Detzel et al. \(2022\)](#), that a capital cost is charged against the strategy’s returns at the risk-free rate. This excess return corresponds more closely to the strategy’s economic profitability.

how much it could have expanded the achievable investment frontier.

6 Does OLM add relative to related anomalies?

With so many anomalies, it is possible that any proposed, new cross-sectional predictor is just capturing some combination of known predictors. It is consequently natural to investigate to what extent the proposed predictor adds additional predictive power beyond the most closely related anomalies. Closely related anomalies are more likely to be formed on the basis of signals with higher absolute correlations. Figure 5 plots a name histogram of the correlations of OLM with 210 filtered anomaly signals.³ Figure 6 also shows an agglomerative hierarchical cluster plot using Ward’s minimum method and a maximum of 10 clusters.

A closely related anomaly is also more likely to price OLM or at least to weaken the power OLM has predicting the cross-section of returns. Figure 7 plots histograms of t-statistics for predictability tests of OLM conditioning on each of the 210 filtered anomaly signals one at a time. Panel A reports t-statistics on β_{OLM} from Fama-MacBeth regressions of the form $r_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_{OLM}OLM_{i,t} + \beta_X X_{i,t} + \epsilon_{i,t}$, where X stands for one of the 210 filtered anomaly signals at a time. Panel B plots t-statistics on α from spanning tests of the form: $r_{OLM,t} = \alpha + \beta r_{X,t} + \epsilon_t$, where $r_{X,t}$ stands for the returns to one of the 210 filtered anomaly trading strategies at a time. The strategies employed in the spanning tests are constructed using quintile sorts, value-weighting, and NYSE breakpoints. Panel C plots t-statistics on the average returns to strategies constructed by conditional double sorts. In each month, we sort stocks into quintiles based one of the 210 filtered anomaly signals. Then, within each quintile, we sort stocks into quintiles based on OLM. Stocks are finally grouped into

³When performing tests at the underlying signal level (e.g., the correlations plotted in Figure 5), we filter the 212 anomalies to avoid small sample issues. For each anomaly, we calculate the common stock observations in an average month for which both the anomaly and the test signal are available. In the filtered anomaly set, we drop anomalies with fewer than 100 common stock observations in an average month.

five OLM portfolios by combining stocks within each anomaly sorting portfolio. The panel plots the t-statistics on the average returns of these conditional double-sorted OLM trading strategies conditioned on each of the 210 filtered anomalies.

Table 4 reports Fama-MacBeth cross-sectional regressions of returns on OLM and the six anomalies most closely-related to it. The six most-closely related anomalies are picked as those with the highest combined rank where the ranks are based on the absolute value of the Spearman correlations in Panel B of Figure 5 and the R^2 from the spanning tests in Figure 7, Panel B. Controlling for each of these signals at a time, the t-statistics on the OLM signal in these Fama-MacBeth regressions exceed 0.00, with the minimum t-statistic occurring when controlling for Predicted Analyst forecast error. Controlling for all six closely related anomalies, the t-statistic on OLM is NaN.

Similarly, Table 5 reports results from spanning tests that regress returns to the OLM strategy onto the returns of the six most closely-related anomalies and the six Fama-French factors. Controlling for the six most-closely related anomalies individually, the OLM strategy earns alphas that range from 19-40bps/month. The minimum t-statistic on these alphas controlling for one anomaly at a time is 1.98, which is achieved when controlling for Predicted Analyst forecast error. Controlling for all six closely-related anomalies and the six Fama-French factors simultaneously, the OLM trading strategy achieves an alpha of 24bps/month with a t-statistic of 2.12.

7 Does OLM add relative to the whole zoo?

Finally, we can ask how much adding OLM to the entire factor zoo could improve investment performance. Figure 8 plots the growth of \$1 invested in trading strategies that combine multiple anomalies following Chen and Velikov (2022). The combina-

tions use either the 155 anomalies from the zoo that satisfy our inclusion criteria (blue lines) or these 155 anomalies augmented with the OLM signal.⁴ We consider one different methods for combining signals.

Panel A shows results using “Average rank” as the combination method. This method sorts stocks on the basis of forecast excess returns, where these are calculated on the basis of their average cross-sectional percentile rank across return predictors, and the predictors are all signed so that higher ranks are associated with higher average returns. For this method, \$1 investment in the 155-anomaly combination strategy grows to \$3137.77, while \$1 investment in the combination strategy that includes OLM grows to \$3317.15.

8 Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence for the significance of Operating Liquidity Margin (OLM) as a valuable predictor of stock returns in the cross-section of equities. Our findings demonstrate that a value-weighted long/short trading strategy based on OLM generates economically meaningful and statistically significant returns, even after accounting for transaction costs and controlling for well-established risk factors.

The signal’s robustness is particularly noteworthy, maintaining its predictive power with a gross monthly alpha of 24 basis points even when controlling for the Fama-French five factors, momentum, and six closely related strategies from the factor zoo. The achievement of an annualized gross Sharpe ratio of 0.30 (0.27 net) suggests that OLM captures a distinct aspect of firm performance that is not fully reflected in existing factors.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study’s findings may be sensitive to the specific time period examined, and the signal’s effectiveness could

⁴We filter the 207 [Chen and Zimmermann \(2022\)](#) anomalies and require for each anomaly the average month to have at least 40% of the cross-sectional observations available for market capitalization on CRSP in the period for which OLM is available.

vary across different market conditions or geographic regions. Additionally, the implementation costs might be higher for smaller investors or in less liquid markets.

Future research could explore several promising directions. First, investigating the interaction between OLM and other established signals could yield insights into potential complementarities or substitution effects. Second, examining the signal's performance in international markets would test its global applicability. Finally, analyzing the underlying economic mechanisms driving the OLM premium could enhance our understanding of market efficiency and asset pricing.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that OLM represents a meaningful addition to the investment practitioner's toolkit, while also contributing to the academic literature on return predictability and asset pricing.

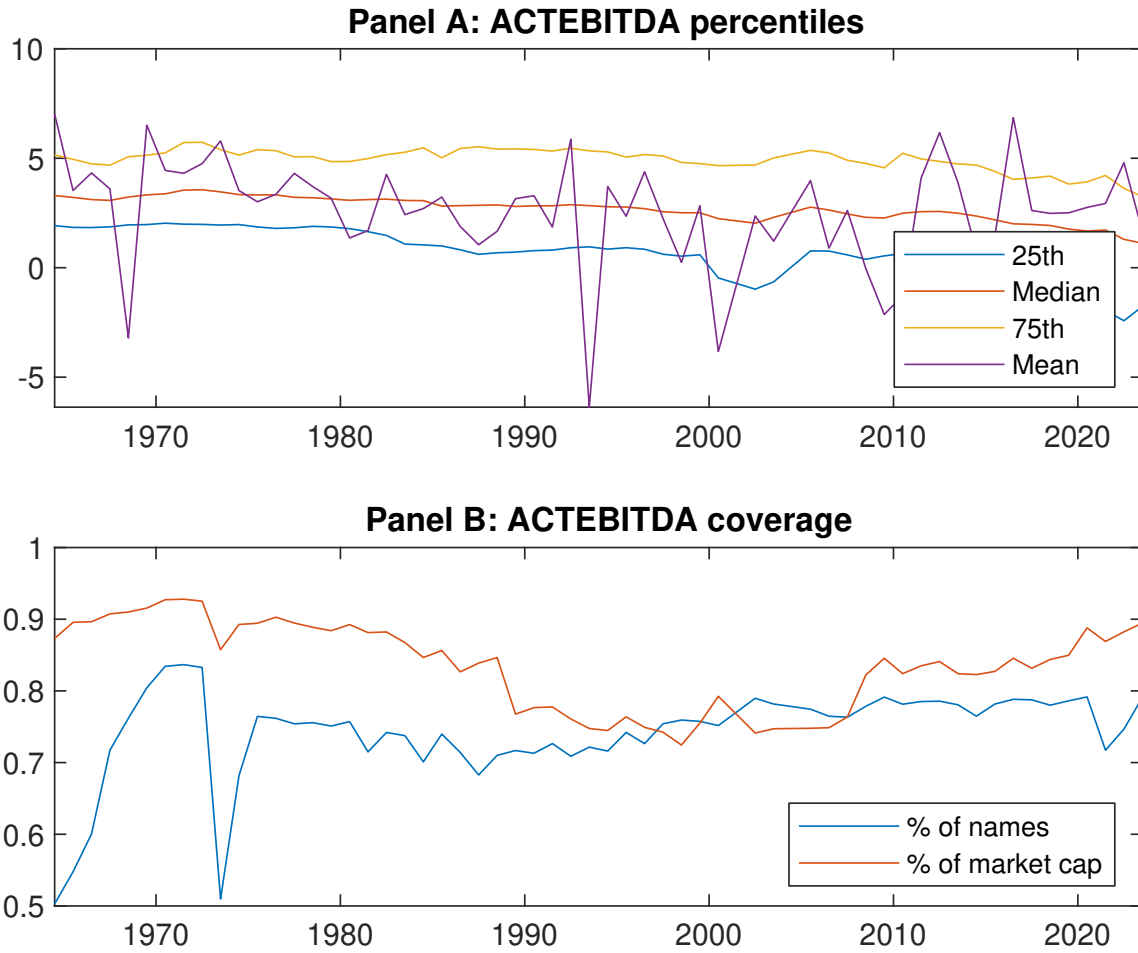


Figure 1: Times series of OLM percentiles and coverage. This figure plots descriptive statistics for OLM. Panel A shows cross-sectional percentiles of OLM over the sample. Panel B plots the monthly coverage of OLM relative to the universe of CRSP stocks with available market capitalizations.

Table 1: Basic sort: VW, quintile, NYSE-breaks

This table reports average excess returns and alphas for portfolios sorted on OLM. At the end of each month, we sort stocks into five portfolios based on their signal using NYSE breakpoints. Panel A reports average value-weighted quintile portfolio (L,2,3,4,H) returns in excess of the risk-free rate, the long-short extreme quintile portfolio (H-L) return, and alphas with respect to the CAPM, [Fama and French \(1993\)](#) three-factor model, [Fama and French \(1993\)](#) three-factor model augmented with the [Carhart \(1997\)](#) momentum factor, [Fama and French \(2015\)](#) five-factor model, and the [Fama and French \(2015\)](#) five-factor model augmented with the [Carhart \(1997\)](#) momentum factor following [Fama and French \(2018\)](#). Panel B reports the factor loadings for the quintile portfolios and long-short extreme quintile portfolio in the [Fama and French \(2015\)](#) five-factor model. Panel C reports the average number of stocks and market capitalization of each portfolio. T-statistics are in brackets. The sample period is 196406 to 202306.

| Panel A: Excess returns and alphas on OLM-sorted portfolios | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | (L) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (H) | (H-L) |
| r^e | 0.40 [2.55] | 0.59 [3.75] | 0.63 [3.46] | 0.63 [3.06] | 0.73 [3.09] | 0.32 [2.34] |
| α_{CAPM} | -0.07 [-1.12] | 0.10 [2.06] | 0.05 [1.10] | -0.02 [-0.24] | 0.02 [0.17] | 0.09 [0.73] |
| α_{FF3} | -0.07 [-1.12] | 0.12 [2.81] | 0.09 [2.14] | 0.02 [0.28] | 0.04 [0.63] | 0.12 [1.14] |
| α_{FF4} | -0.08 [-1.24] | 0.09 [2.08] | 0.11 [2.51] | 0.07 [1.23] | 0.08 [1.11] | 0.16 [1.55] |
| α_{FF5} | -0.02 [-0.26] | -0.01 [-0.36] | 0.06 [1.44] | 0.06 [1.07] | 0.21 [3.21] | 0.23 [2.20] |
| α_{FF6} | -0.03 [-0.43] | -0.03 [-0.71] | 0.08 [1.80] | 0.10 [1.78] | 0.23 [3.47] | 0.26 [2.47] |
| Panel B: Fama and French (2018) 6-factor model loadings for OLM-sorted portfolios | | | | | | |
| β_{MKT} | 0.85 [54.13] | 0.95 [100.75] | 1.02 [99.41] | 1.08 [77.72] | 1.12 [70.80] | 0.27 [10.84] |
| β_{SMB} | -0.06 [-2.69] | -0.10 [-7.06] | 0.02 [1.07] | 0.18 [9.07] | 0.36 [15.63] | 0.42 [11.61] |
| β_{HML} | 0.03 [1.14] | -0.11 [-5.89] | -0.13 [-6.79] | -0.14 [-5.37] | -0.24 [-7.94] | -0.28 [-5.75] |
| β_{RMW} | -0.15 [-4.83] | 0.24 [13.10] | 0.08 [4.18] | -0.04 [-1.51] | -0.42 [-13.49] | -0.27 [-5.52] |
| β_{CMA} | -0.03 [-0.57] | 0.21 [7.85] | 0.01 [0.37] | -0.09 [-2.36] | -0.03 [-0.64] | -0.00 [-0.05] |
| β_{UMD} | 0.02 [1.12] | 0.02 [2.23] | -0.02 [-2.40] | -0.06 [-4.53] | -0.03 [-1.85] | -0.05 [-1.88] |
| Panel C: Average number of firms (n) and market capitalization (me) | | | | | | |
| n | 943 | 447 | 486 | 578 | 859 | |
| me (\$10 ⁶) | 1413 | 2607 | 1876 | 1414 | 858 | |

Table 2: Robustness to sorting methodology & trading costs

This table evaluates the robustness of the choices made in the OLM strategy construction methodology. In each panel, the first row shows results from a quintile, value-weighted sort using NYSE break points as employed in Table 1. Each of the subsequent rows deviates in one of the three choices at a time, and the choices are specified in the first three columns. For each strategy construction methodology, the table reports average excess returns and alphas with respect to the CAPM, Fama and French (1993) three-factor model, Fama and French (1993) three-factor model augmented with the Carhart (1997) momentum factor, Fama and French (2015) five-factor model, and the Fama and French (2015) five-factor model augmented with the Carhart (1997) momentum factor following Fama and French (2018). Panel A reports average returns and alphas with no adjustment for trading costs. Panel B reports net average returns and Novy-Marx and Velikov (2016) generalized alphas as prescribed by Detzel et al. (2022). T-statistics are in brackets. The sample period is 196406 to 202306.

| Panel A: Gross Returns and Alphas | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Portfolios | Breaks | Weights | r^e | α_{CAPM} | α_{FF3} | α_{FF4} | α_{FF5} | α_{FF6} |
| Quintile | NYSE | VW | 0.32 [2.34] | 0.09 [0.73] | 0.12 [1.14] | 0.16 [1.55] | 0.23 [2.20] | 0.26 [2.47] |
| Quintile | NYSE | EW | 0.38 [3.46] | 0.37 [3.37] | 0.27 [2.50] | 0.21 [1.89] | 0.05 [0.49] | 0.01 [0.10] |
| Quintile | Name | VW | 0.49 [3.38] | 0.46 [3.18] | 0.36 [2.56] | 0.34 [2.36] | 0.04 [0.29] | 0.04 [0.33] |
| Quintile | Cap | VW | 0.30 [2.46] | 0.09 [0.85] | 0.15 [1.64] | 0.18 [1.93] | 0.23 [2.38] | 0.25 [2.55] |
| Decile | NYSE | VW | 0.35 [2.23] | 0.11 [0.78] | 0.13 [0.97] | 0.11 [0.81] | 0.13 [0.98] | 0.12 [0.86] |
| Panel B: Net Returns and Novy-Marx and Velikov (2016) generalized alphas | | | | | | | | |
| Portfolios | Breaks | Weights | r_{net}^e | α_{CAPM}^* | α_{FF3}^* | α_{FF4}^* | α_{FF5}^* | α_{FF6}^* |
| Quintile | NYSE | VW | 0.29 [2.11] | 0.06 [0.52] | 0.08 [0.80] | 0.11 [1.07] | 0.16 [1.58] | 0.17 [1.70] |
| Quintile | NYSE | EW | 0.20 [1.73] | 0.17 [1.46] | 0.07 [0.63] | 0.04 [0.34] | | |
| Quintile | Name | VW | 0.43 [2.95] | 0.42 [2.85] | 0.32 [2.27] | 0.31 [2.18] | 0.03 [0.23] | 0.04 [0.34] |
| Quintile | Cap | VW | 0.28 [2.29] | 0.07 [0.66] | 0.12 [1.30] | 0.14 [1.49] | 0.17 [1.76] | 0.17 [1.81] |
| Decile | NYSE | VW | 0.30 [1.92] | 0.07 [0.50] | 0.07 [0.58] | 0.07 [0.52] | 0.06 [0.48] | 0.05 [0.40] |

Table 3: Conditional sort on size and OLM

This table presents results for conditional double sorts on size and OLM. In each month, stocks are first sorted into quintiles based on size using NYSE breakpoints. Then, within each size quintile, stocks are further sorted based on OLM. Finally, they are grouped into twenty-five portfolios based on the intersection of the two sorts. Panel A presents the average returns to the 25 portfolios, as well as strategies that go long stocks with high OLM and short stocks with low OLM. Panel B documents the average number of firms and the average firm size for each portfolio. The sample period is 1964Q6 to 2023Q6.

| Panel A: portfolio average returns and time-series regression results | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--|-----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Size quintiles | OLM Quintiles | | | | | OLM Strategies | | | | | | |
| | (L) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (H) | r^e | α_{CAPM} | α_{FF3} | α_{FF4} | α_{FF5} | α_{FF6} | |
| | (1) | 0.49 [1.60] | 0.52 [1.80] | 0.68 [2.72] | 0.88 [3.53] | 0.87 [3.12] | 0.38 [2.71] | 0.43 [3.03] | 0.29 [2.13] | 0.28 [2.01] | 0.02 [0.15] | 0.03 [0.23] |
| | (2) | 0.67 [2.45] | 0.74 [3.26] | 0.72 [3.14] | 0.84 [3.52] | 0.76 [2.88] | 0.09 [0.70] | 0.07 [0.55] | -0.06 [-0.53] | -0.07 [-0.53] | -0.34 [-3.02] | -0.32 [-2.81] |
| | (3) | 0.56 [2.42] | 0.83 [4.14] | 0.72 [3.42] | 0.86 [3.83] | 0.68 [2.70] | 0.12 [0.90] | 0.01 [0.09] | -0.07 [-0.53] | -0.12 [-0.91] | -0.28 [-2.24] | -0.31 [-2.42] |
| | (4) | 0.51 [2.70] | 0.68 [3.62] | 0.79 [3.97] | 0.74 [3.50] | 0.80 [3.29] | 0.29 [2.14] | 0.10 [0.83] | 0.12 [1.05] | 0.11 [0.96] | 0.10 [0.80] | 0.09 [0.77] |
| | (5) | 0.34 [2.20] | 0.57 [3.65] | 0.55 [3.36] | 0.57 [3.06] | 0.63 [2.87] | 0.29 [1.98] | 0.05 [0.40] | 0.17 [1.41] | 0.19 [1.62] | 0.31 [2.64] | 0.33 [2.72] |
| Panel B: Portfolio average number of firms and market capitalization | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Size quintiles | OLM Quintiles | | | | | OLM Quintiles | | | | | | |
| | Average n | | | | | Average market capitalization (\$10 ⁶) | | | | | | |
| | (L) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (H) | (L) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (H) | | |
| | (1) | 371 | 369 | 379 | 380 | 378 | 24 | 26 | 34 | 34 | 27 | |
| | (2) | 101 | 101 | 101 | 102 | 101 | 48 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 48 | |
| | (3) | 71 | 72 | 72 | 71 | 71 | 82 | 85 | 85 | 84 | 82 | |
| | (4) | 60 | 60 | 61 | 60 | 60 | 175 | 184 | 185 | 183 | 176 | |
| (5) | 53 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 1056 | 1451 | 1492 | 1340 | 1118 | | |

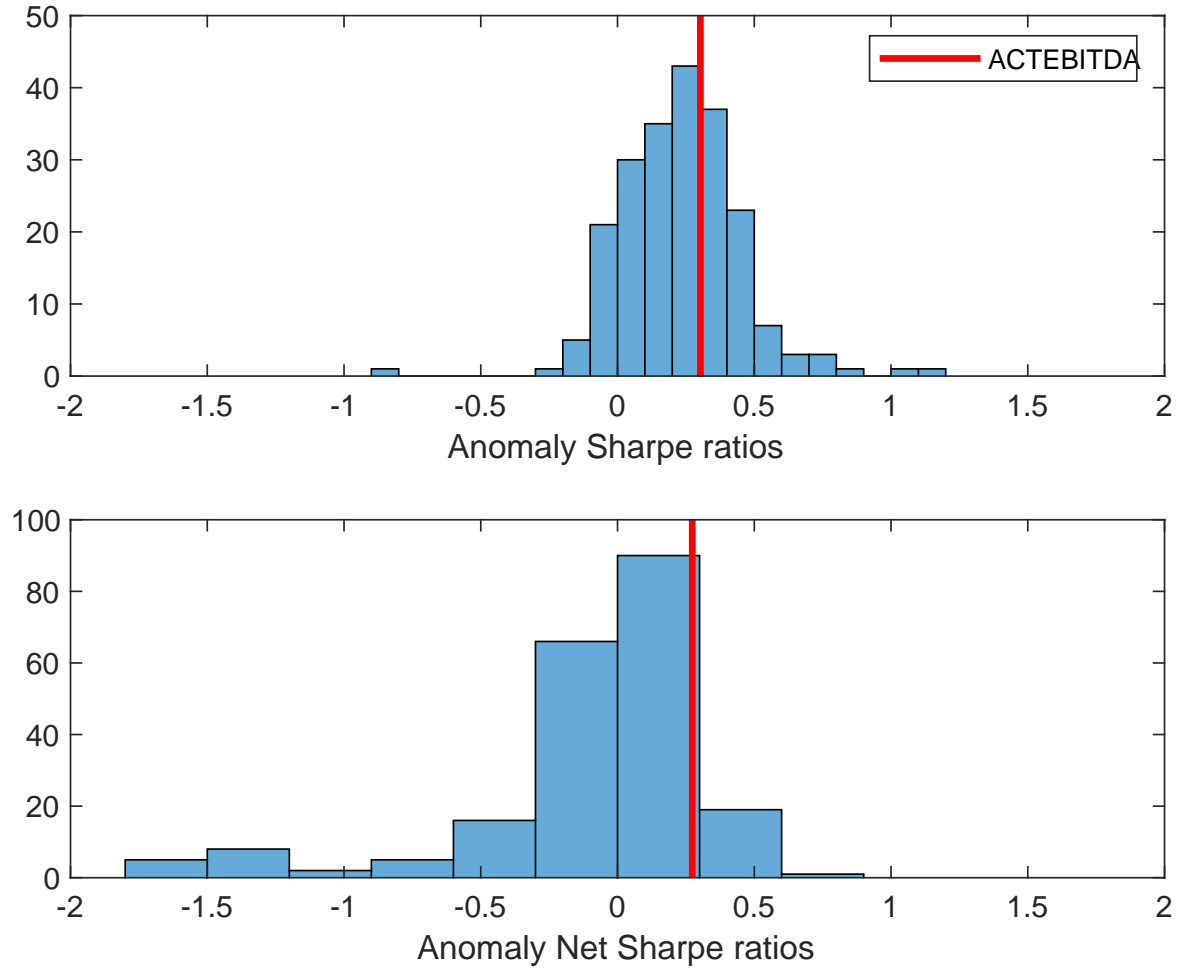


Figure 2: Distribution of Sharpe ratios.

This figure plots a histogram of Sharpe ratios for 212 anomalies, and compares the Sharpe ratio of the OLM with them (red vertical line). Panel A plots results for gross Sharpe ratios. Panel B plots results for net Sharpe ratios.

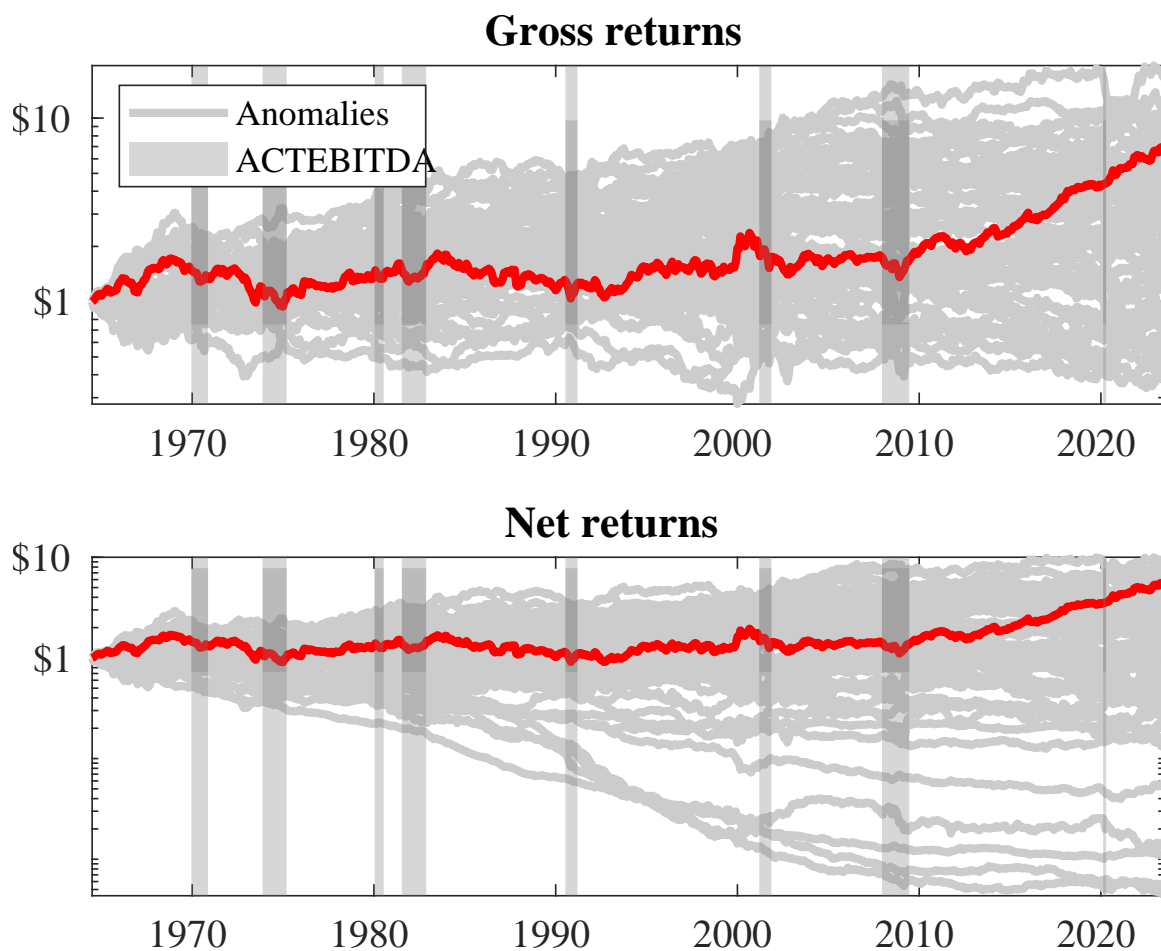


Figure 3: Dollar invested.

This figure plots the growth of a \$1 invested in 212 anomaly trading strategies (gray lines), and compares those with the OLM trading strategy (red line). The strategies are constructed using value-weighted quintile sorts using NYSE breakpoints. Panel A plots results for gross strategy returns. Panel B plots results for net strategy returns.

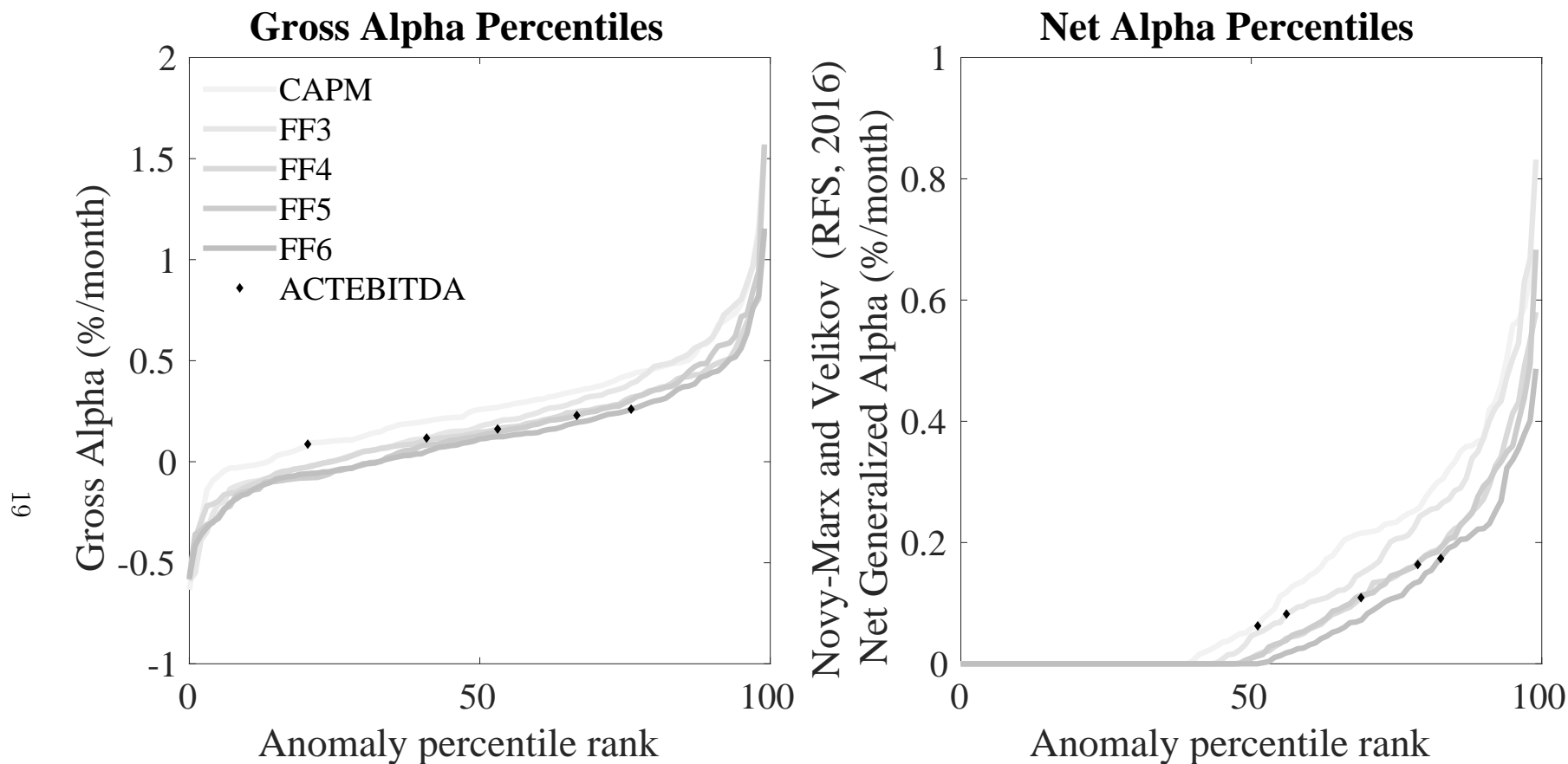


Figure 4: Gross and generalized net alpha percentiles of anomalies relative to factor models

This figure plots the percentile ranks for 212 anomaly trading strategies in terms of alphas (solid lines), and compares those with the OLM trading strategy alphas (diamonds). The strategies are constructed using value-weighted quintile sorts using NYSE breakpoints. The alphas include those with respect to the CAPM, Fama and French (1993) three-factor model, Fama and French (1993) three-factor model augmented with the Carhart (1997) momentum factor, Fama and French (2015) five-factor model, and the Fama and French (2015) five-factor model augmented with the Carhart (1997) momentum factor following Fama and French (2018). The left panel plots alphas with no adjustment for trading costs. The right panel plots Novy-Marx and Velikov (2016) net generalized alphas.

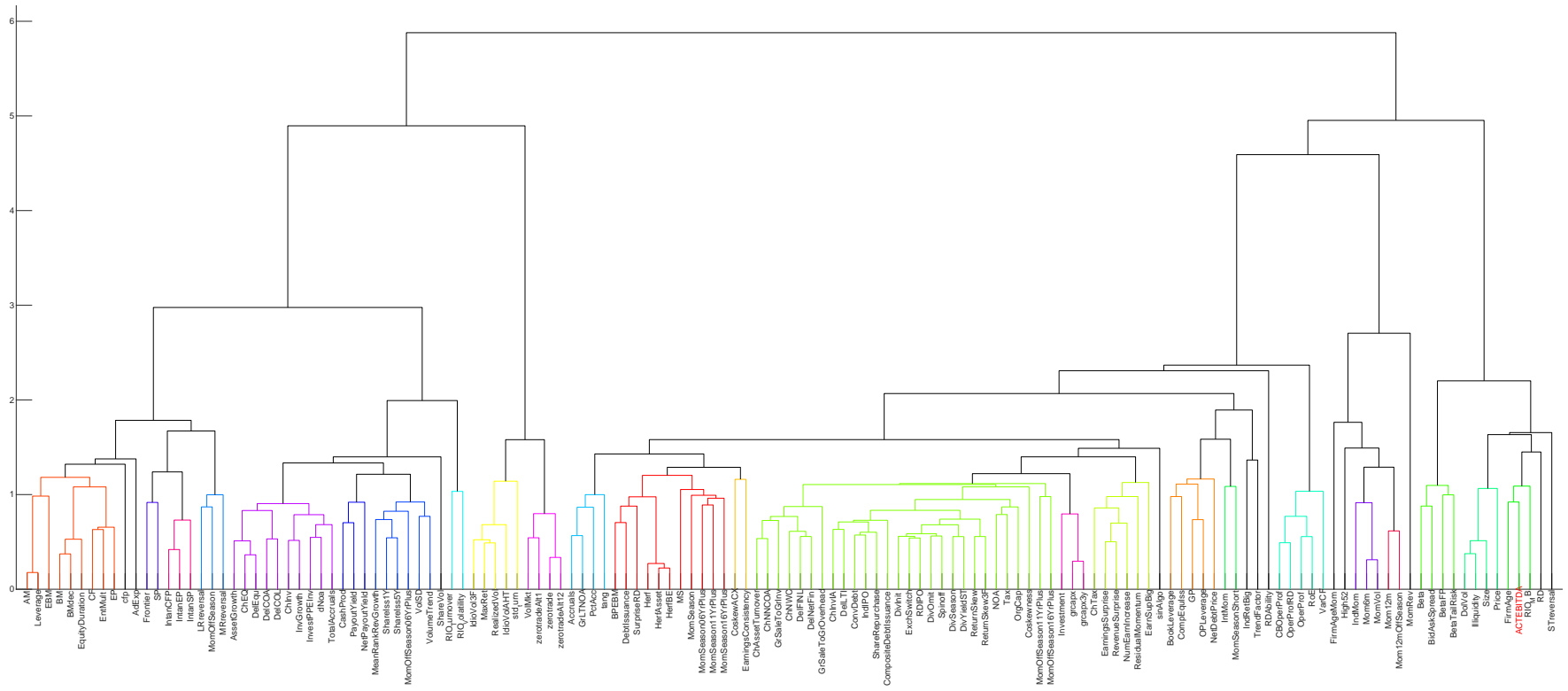


Figure 6: Agglomerative hierarchical cluster plot

This figure plots an agglomerative hierarchical cluster plot using Ward's minimum method and a maximum of 10 clusters.

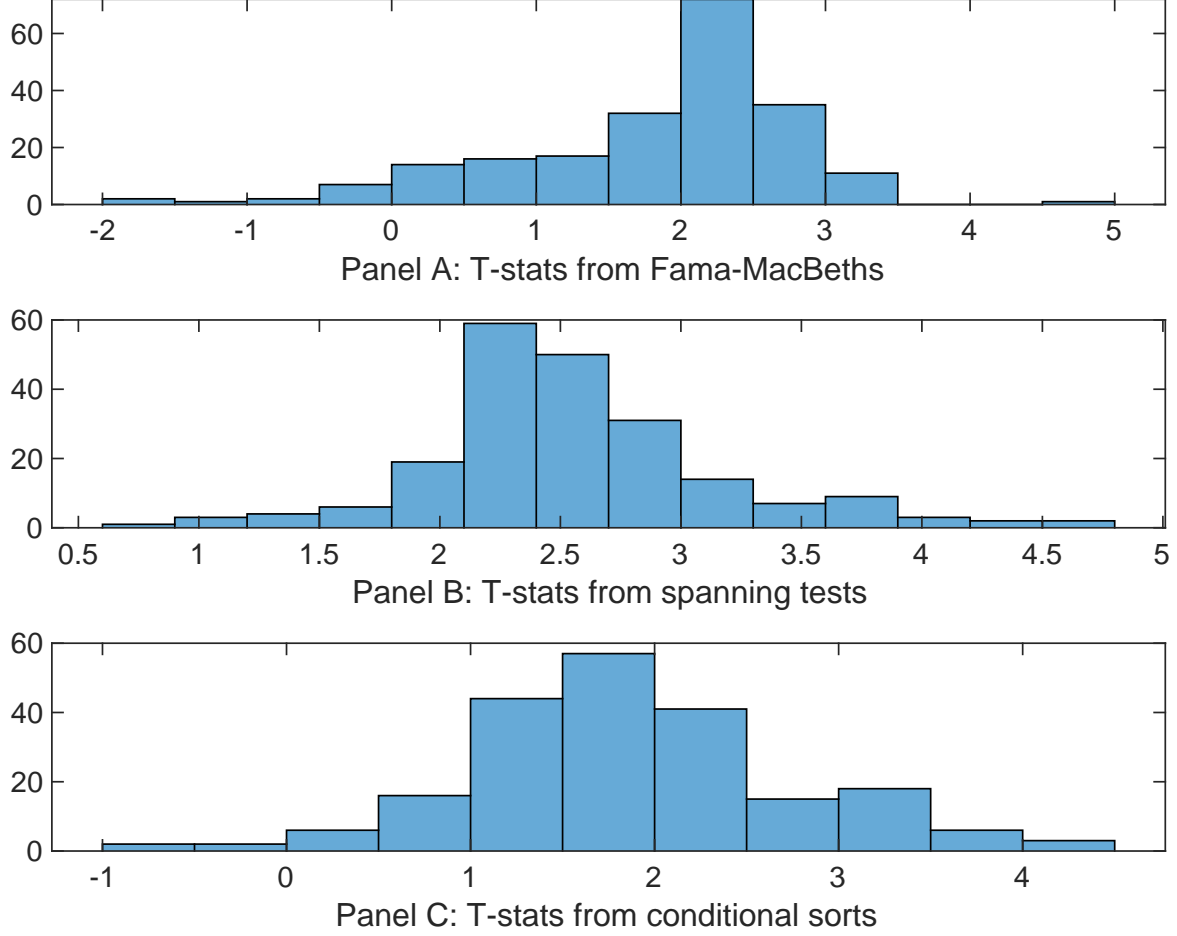


Figure 7: Distribution of t-stats on conditioning strategies

This figure plots histograms of t-statistics for predictability tests of OLM conditioning on each of the 210 filtered anomaly signals one at a time. Panel A reports t-statistics on β_{OLM} from Fama-MacBeth regressions of the form $r_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_{OLM} OLM_{i,t} + \beta_X X_{i,t} + \epsilon_{i,t}$, where X stands for one of the 210 filtered anomaly signals at a time. Panel B plots t-statistics on α from spanning tests of the form: $r_{OLM,t} = \alpha + \beta r_{X,t} + \epsilon_t$, where $r_{X,t}$ stands for the returns to one of the 210 filtered anomaly trading strategies at a time. The strategies employed in the spanning tests are constructed using quintile sorts, value-weighting, and NYSE breakpoints. Panel C plots t-statistics on the average returns to strategies constructed by conditional double sorts. In each month, we sort stocks into quintiles based one of the 210 filtered anomaly signals at a time. Then, within each quintile, we sort stocks into quintiles based on OLM. Stocks are finally grouped into five OLM portfolios by combining stocks within each anomaly sorting portfolio. The panel plots the t-statistics on the average returns of these conditional double-sorted OLM trading strategies conditioned on each of the 210 filtered anomalies.

Table 4: Fama-MacBeths controlling for most closely related anomalies

This table presents Fama-MacBeth results of returns on OLM. and the six most closely related anomalies. The regressions take the following form: $r_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_{OLM} OLM_{i,t} + \sum_{k=1}^s \beta_{X_k} X_{i,t}^k + \epsilon_{i,t}$. The six most closely related anomalies, X , are operating profits / book equity, Predicted Analyst forecast error, Analyst earnings per share, Share turnover volatility, IPO and age, Operating leverage. These anomalies were picked as those with the highest combined rank where the ranks are based on the absolute value of the Spearman correlations in Panel B of Figure 5 and the R^2 from the spanning tests in Figure 7, Panel B. The sample period is 196406 to 202306.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| Intercept | 0.91 [3.91] | 0.11 [5.25] | 0.10 [3.46] | 0.17 [7.15] | 0.86 [1.95] | 0.97 [4.21] | |
| OLM | 0.12 [3.12] | 0.33 [0.00] | 0.38 [1.47] | 0.44 [0.20] | 0.26 [0.58] | 0.58 [2.15] | |
| Anomaly 1 | 0.50 [3.81] | | | | | | |
| Anomaly 2 | | 0.78 [0.29] | | | | | |
| Anomaly 3 | | | 0.70 [1.16] | | | | |
| Anomaly 4 | | | | 0.76 [4.67] | | | |
| Anomaly 5 | | | | | 0.27 [0.59] | | |
| Anomaly 6 | | | | | | 0.16 [4.07] | |
| # months | 703 | 480 | 564 | 703 | 463 | 708 | 0 |
| $\bar{R}^2(\%)$ | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | |

Table 5: Spanning tests controlling for most closely related anomalies

This table presents spanning tests results of regressing returns to the OLM trading strategy on trading strategies exploiting the six most closely related anomalies. The regressions take the following form: $r_t^{OLM} = \alpha + \sum_{k=1}^6 \beta_{X_k} r_t^{X_k} + \sum_{j=1}^6 \beta_{f_j} r_t^{f_j} + \epsilon_t$, where X_k indicates each of the six most-closely related anomalies and f_j indicates the six factors from the [Fama and French \(2015\)](#) five-factor model augmented with the [Carhart \(1997\)](#) momentum factor. The six most closely related anomalies, X , are operating profits / book equity, Predicted Analyst forecast error, Analyst earnings per share, Share turnover volatility, IPO and age, Operating leverage. These anomalies were picked as those with the highest combined rank where the ranks are based on the absolute value of the Spearman correlations in Panel B of Figure 5 and the R^2 from the spanning tests in Figure 7, Panel B. The sample period is 196406 to 202306.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Intercept | 0.34 [3.45] | 0.24 [1.98] | 0.33 [2.77] | 0.24 [2.30] | 0.40 [3.14] | 0.19 [2.04] | 0.24 [2.12] |
| Anomaly 1 | -43.15 [-9.42] | | | | | | -32.06 [-5.62] |
| Anomaly 2 | | -25.78 [-6.95] | | | | | -20.91 [-5.97] |
| Anomaly 3 | | | -5.29 [-1.13] | | | | 7.46 [1.55] |
| Anomaly 4 | | | | 8.92 [2.96] | | | 12.60 [3.80] |
| Anomaly 5 | | | | | 2.26 [0.92] | | 0.29 [0.13] |
| Anomaly 6 | | | | | | 45.16 [11.94] | 30.04 [6.31] |
| mkt | 21.54 [9.00] | 25.31 [8.41] | 27.00 [9.12] | 31.56 [11.24] | 27.84 [9.39] | 28.58 [12.70] | 30.37 [9.20] |
| smb | 32.82 [9.30] | 37.41 [8.35] | 32.69 [6.26] | 48.31 [12.50] | 36.35 [7.78] | 22.97 [6.27] | 27.83 [5.16] |
| hml | -27.81 [-6.23] | -17.30 [-3.01] | -28.08 [-5.17] | -28.73 [-5.87] | -29.65 [-5.12] | -2.70 [-0.57] | -10.93 [-1.77] |
| rmw | 11.15 [1.78] | -17.56 [-3.02] | -27.01 [-3.74] | -36.45 [-6.95] | -35.83 [-5.66] | -53.70 [-11.03] | -29.23 [-3.28] |
| cma | -3.33 [-0.51] | 2.47 [0.31] | -0.13 [-0.02] | -5.46 [-0.79] | -6.24 [-0.75] | -7.99 [-1.25] | -4.01 [-0.53] |
| umd | -0.29 [-0.13] | -4.65 [-1.67] | -3.33 [-1.15] | -6.57 [-2.65] | -3.38 [-1.17] | -5.65 [-2.54] | -6.76 [-2.35] |
| # months | 704 | 480 | 565 | 704 | 507 | 708 | 476 |
| $\bar{R}^2(\%)$ | 56 | 55 | 50 | 52 | 50 | 58 | 63 |

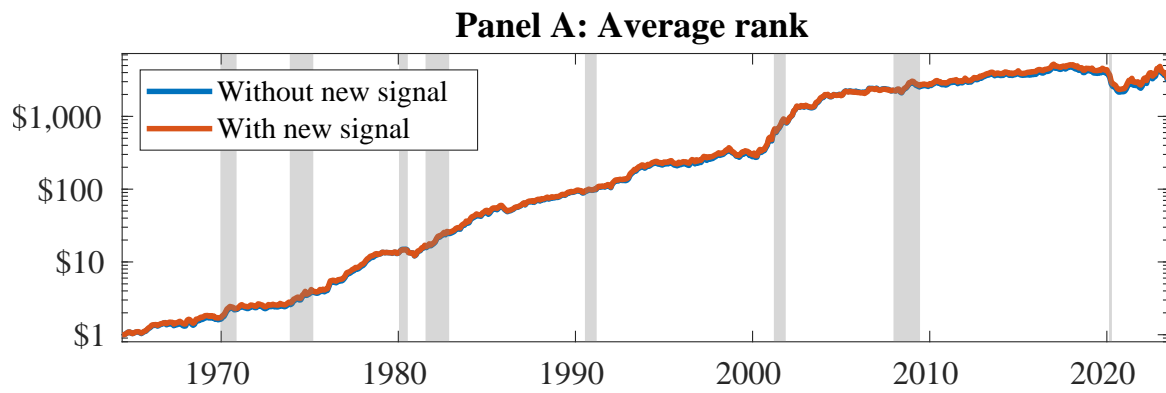


Figure 8: Combination strategy performance

This figure plots the growth of a \$1 invested in trading strategies that combine multiple anomalies following [Chen and Velikov \(2022\)](#). In all panels, the blue solid lines indicate combination trading strategies that utilize 155 anomalies. The red solid lines indicate combination trading strategies that utilize the 155 anomalies as well as OLM. Panel A shows results using "Average rank" as the combination method. See [Section 7](#) for details on the combination methods.

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