Aihuan Zhang

azhan15@lsu.edu | https://zhangaihuan.github.io/

Louisiana State University - E. J. Ourso College of Business, 501 South Quad Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70803

EDUCATION

Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, USA
Doctor of Philosophy in Finance   *May 2026 (Expected)*
Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China
Master of Management Science in Corporate Management   *March 2014*
Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China
Bachelor of Management Science in Electronic Commerce   *June 2010*

RESEARCH INTEREST

Venture Capital, Corporate Finance, Banking, Fintech

WORKING PAPERS

Screening Frictions in Venture Capital: Evidence from Political Distance
Job Market Paper
Abstract: I study whether partisan separation between investor and startup locations creates screening frictions in venture capital. Using county-level presidential vote shares to measure political distance (PD), I find that higher PD between VC and startup counties significantly reduces investment incidence. A one-standard-deviation increase in PD lowers the likelihood of match formation by 0.7–0.8 percentage points—roughly eight percent of the baseline rate. The effect amplifies in opaque settings—first rounds, young startups, and VC first entries—and attenuates in information-rich environments such as VC hubs and during the pandemic. I find little support for alternative mechanisms: VC capability, systematic political risk, sectoral exposure, or geographic distance. Conditional on funding, higher-PD deals exhibit better outcomes, consistent with tighter screening. The evidence suggests this friction operates primarily through information asymmetries in the screening process. These findings reveal how geographic political sorting creates tangible costs in entrepreneurial finance, with implications for regional innovation policy and capital allocation efficiency.

Brand Equity and Debt Diversification (with David C. Mauer, and Miaomiao Yu)
R&R Financial Management
Presentations: FMA 2024, SFA 2024, University of Alabama, Louisiana State University
Abstract: The optimal number of debt types in firms' debt structures is determined by a tradeoff between the costs of coordination failure and the benefits of reducing holdup problems. Brand equity affects this tradeoff by signaling larger and more stable future cash flows and greater awareness of firms' products and services. We argue that these characteristics may allow for greater debt diversity by decreasing expected costs of coordination failure while enhancing the benefits of reduced holdup problems. Using trademarks to construct brand equity measures, we find that more valuable brand equity positively predicts debt diversity. Natural experiments and IV analysis help establish causality. Cross-sectional analysis shows that the brand equity and debt diversity relationship is stronger when firms face more intense product market competition and information asymmetry.

The Role of Financial Investors in FinTech Equity Financing
Abstract: This study examines whether financial institution-backed venture capital (FI-VC) enhances FinTech startups' ability to raise subsequent equity financing. Using global data on 2,891 FinTech startups from 2010-2024, I employ discrete-time logit models to estimate the probability of securing new equity rounds. FinTech startups backed by FI-VC exhibit 50% higher odds of raising subsequent financing (p<0.001). Survival analysis confirms FI-VC-backed startups are 33% more likely to secure financing at any point in time. The effect is stronger for later-stage investments and varied by COVID-19 timing. Results suggest financial institution backing serves as a quality signal, reducing information asymmetries for future investors.

WORKING IN PROGRESS

Industry Similarity and Venture Capital Geographic Allocation
Political Proximity and Bank Lending Specialization

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

College Teaching Award 2024-2025, E. J. Ourso College of Business, Louisiana State University	*Fall 2024*
Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) Recognition, Louisiana State University	*Fall 2024*

  – *Recognized by students for exceptional communication and creating a welcoming, supportive learning environment*

Lynne and Kit Marye Superior Graduate Scholarship in Finance, Louisiana State University	*Spring 2025*
Keith And Evie Katz Superior Graduate Student Scholarship	*Fall 2025*
Kevin Kelty Super Graduate Scholarship, Louisiana State University	*Fall 2023*
Graduate Student Association Travel Award 2024-2025, Louisiana State University	*Fall 2024*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Department of Finance, Louisiana State University

 FIN 3716 – Principles of Finance (Undergraduates)

- Spring 2025
 Enrollment: 245 Students
 Evaluation: 3.7/4.0 (Department Average: 3.3; College Average: 3.5)
- Fall 2024 – **College Teaching Award 2024-2025**
 Enrollment: 255 Students
 Evaluation: 3.1/4.0 (Department Average: 3.1; College Average: 3.5)

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

2025 Louisiana State University Seminar
2024 Louisiana State University Seminar, Southern Finance Association (SFA) Annual Meeting
2023 Louisiana State University Seminar
2022 Louisiana State University Seminar, Financial Management Association Annual Meeting (Discussion)

PROGRAMMING

R, Stata, SAS

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Financial Affairs Office, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China	*2014 – 2020*
Government of Huilongguan Town, Beijing, China	*2010 – 2011*

REFERENCES

Wei-Ling Song (Chair)
Professor of Finance
Louisiana State University
E. J. Ourso College of Business
wsong@lsu.edu

Yingmei Cheng
Professor of Finance
Louisiana State University
E. J. Ourso College of Business
yingmeicheng@lsu.edu

Seyed Kazempour
Assistant Professor of Finance
Louisiana State University
E. J. Ourso College of Business
skazempour@lsu.edu