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Bitcoin Price Forecasting using Web Search and Social Media Data

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ABSTRACT

As the world's first decentralized electronic currency system, Bitcoin has achieved great success and represents a fundamental change in financial systems. The unique feature of Bitcoin is that its price fluctuation relies mostly on people's pertinent opinions instead of institutionalized money regulation. Therefore, understanding the interplay between social media and the value of Bitcoin is crucial for Bitcoin price prediction. In this study, related comments posted on the Bitcoin forum were analyzed. Conceptual link of extracted key-words of interests were developed. Five major clusters to help gain insight into Bitcoin's user opinion were obtained from text mining analysis. Furthermore, cross-correlation between Bitcoin price fluctuation and web search—Google Trends, social media—Twitter were examined respectively. To better facilitate Bitcoin investor's future investment, forecasting models were built, and the effectiveness of proposed models were validated based on AIC and MAPE value comparison. Forecasting model using both Bitcoin daily transaction data and Google Trends data was selected based on better performance.

INTRODUCTION

Bitcoin, a decentralized electronic currency system, represents a radical change in financial systems after its creation in 2008 by Satoshi Nakamoto. "It was released as an open-source software in 2009 on a peer-to-peer system where transactions take place between users without an intermediary (7)". In contrast to the traditional banking system, Bitcoin allows user to move away from operational fees and an authority filled with fraud and corruption. At the beginning of the year 2017, Bitcoin price was under \$1,000, it has rocketed up to nearly \$14,000 lately, a gain of 14 times. The unprecedented jump in Bitcoin price has triggered the explosion of worldwide attention in digital currencies. Questions towards the nature of digital currencies and the driven force behind the dramatic rise of Bitcoin price within a short time are raised.

Previous studies have shown that one of the unique features of Bitcoin is that its price fluctuation relies mostly on people's pertinent opinions instead of institutionalized money regulation. Twitter as one of the major social media platforms gathers multidimensional perspectives from people worldwide. As an example, at the end of November 2017, Warren Buffet, an influential figure in finance, tweeted his optimistic opinion towards the cryptocurrency world and offered to send 1 \$BTC to everyone who retweeted his post if Bitcoin hits \$12,500 by the next day. The positive tweet from Warren Buffet's social media together with other optimistic perspectives from various platforms had greatly boosted Bitcoin's attraction. Based on these previous findings, understanding the interplay between social media and the value of Bitcoin becomes crucial in understanding the key factors behind its price fluctuation.

The present study examines correlation between social media such as the volume of Tweets and Bitcoin price fluctuation. Additionally, the impact of web search data such as Google Trends on Bitcoin price was also explored. To gain insights into user's opinion formed around the Bitcoin topic, user's comments from an online forum were extracted and analyzed. To better facilitate Bitcoin investor's future investment, forecasting models with different properties were proposed and compared.

DATA UNDERSTANDING

Four different data sources were used during the study (Appendix A):

- Historical BTC/USD
- Twitter
- Bitcoin forum

Google Trend

METHODOLOGIES



Figure 1. Project Flow

ANALYSIS RESULT

With the increasing popularity of Bitcoin, a growing number of Bitcoin users share information on online forums. Bitcoin Forum (https://Bitcointalk.org/) as one of the popular online communities for Bitcoin users. It provides a good platform for users to discuss topics like Bitcoin mining, development, technical issues and the general Bitcoin ecosystem. The user gathered all the comments under the general section of Bitcoin Discussion, terms associate with key concept was explored. To better understand what are the major concerns among users when they talk about Bitcoin, a large amount of user comments toward Bitcoin were clustered into several major clusters through text mining analysis using SAS Enterprise Miner text mining node.

CONCEPT LINKS OF KEY WORDS OF INTERESTS

In this part of the study, a characteristic is considered as a concept describing a certain phenomenon or a subject. A set of key words whose meanings were relevant are used to construct a concept. The thicker the line is the stronger the connection is between terms. From the text interactive filter, it is shown that the concept 'Bitcoin' is strongly associated with terms like profit, future, increase, popular, country, ban, value, China (Appendix B Figure. 11.B.2). Words constituting the concept 'China' are Asia, Russia, contributor, big, fail, ban, effect, and country as shown in (Appendix B Figure. 11.B.3).

TEXT CLUSTERS

There are 5 major clusters identified from Bitcoin forum's user comments through text mining. The content and frequency of the relevant clusters are summarized as follows:



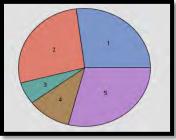


Figure 2. Bitcoin Forum User Opinion Clusters Summarization

From the text cluster results, perception about Bitcoin is the most discussed topic among users. Following up, the investment value of Bitcoin and the legality of cryptocurrency in general also caught a lot of attention among forum users. China as a big economic entity, its impact on the price fluctuation of Bitcoin forms a big topic in the forum discussion. Security issue relates to Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies also raise concerns among users.

TWITTER VS. BITCOIN PRICE

With the development of technology, interested topics are usually discussed in social media such as Twitter. The emerging of Bitcoin, a digital currency, which does not need middle men in transactions draws tremendous attention from the public because of the huge jump in the price recently. At the beginning of 2017, Bitcoin price was only under \$1,000, the price now has rocketed up to nearly \$14,000, a gain of 14 times. Many people wanted to know what Bitcoin is and why it experienced a dramatic rise within a short time, and above all, how can they buy it and shortly make a profit. The graph below shows the trend of Bitcoin price and number of Tweets over the last month.

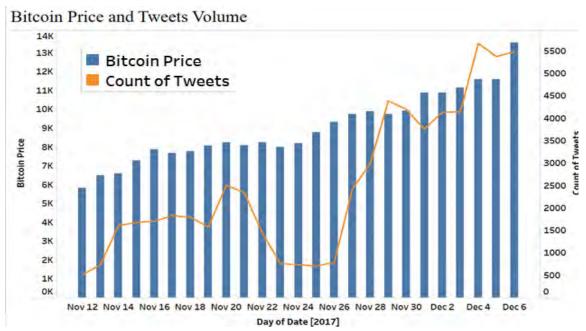


Figure 3. Trend Pattern Comparison between Bitcoin Price and Tweets Volume

As shown in Figure 3, there was seemingly a similar trend between these two lines. The higher the price is, the larger the number of Tweets occurs. A correlation test was performed to make sure the interpretation unbiased. The Pearson test in Figure 13.C.1 (with p-value less than 0.05) shows that there is a strong correlation of 0.86 between Bitcoin price and the volume of Tweets. The test again proved that the higher Bitcoin price is the more people talk about it in social media.

GOOGLE TRENDS VS. BITCOIN PRICE

In this part of the study, correlation between web search data and Bitcoin price was examined. It is shown as in the Figure 4 that there is a causality relationship between the Bitcoin price and web search component: Google Trends. The max correlation is at lag 0 and the next best is for lag -1 followed by lag -2 as displayed in Figure 5. The correlation is positive implying that when the present-day Google search increases, the Bitcoin price increases for the next day. To justify the above observation statistically, the Granger causality test was employed. The output of the test (Appendix D Figure 35.D.22) confirms that Google Trends influenced the Bitcoin price over the time.

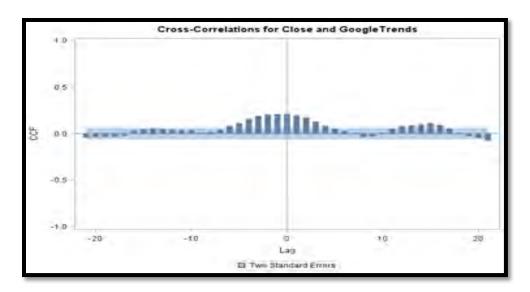


Figure 4. Cross-Correlation Function between Google Trends and Bitcoin Price

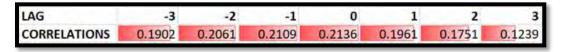


Figure 5. Correlation values between the lags

TIME SERIES MODELING

A series of auto regressive models were employed on the stationary data for model comparison. ARMA(p,q) model could have been used to model returns data. However, In this project modelling of original data is done using ARIMA(p,d,q) models.

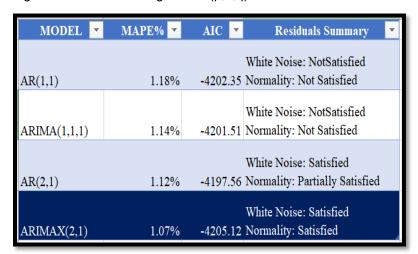
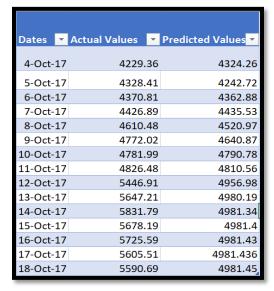


Figure 6. Bitcoin Time Series Model Comparison—Fits Statistics

From the summarized table (Figure 6), it is shown that the ARIMAX (2,1,0) model with the google trend as an independent variable (X) has the lowest AIC and MAPE value. General assumptions of time series model such as stationarity, normality and significant parameters were examined and satisfied. The detailed description regarding to the output of each model can be referred as in Appendix D.

FORECASTING

The ARIMAX (2,1,0) model was selected for Bitcoin price forecasting, based on lowest AIC and MAPE. Employing SAS Studio, we selected 2 weeks ranging from Oct 4th, 2017 to Oct 18th, 2017 with 14-day holdout sample for validation.



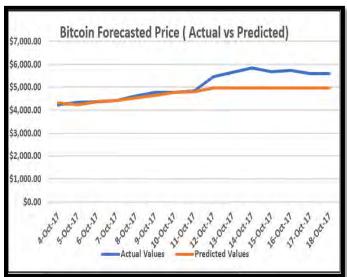


Figure 7. Comparison of Bitcoin Actual and Predictive

To evaluate the prediction result, the forecasted price was cross verified with actual price. The model doesn't forecast more days as in ARIMA the forecast values start approaching the mean value. The detailed description of forecasting procedure can be referred as from the Appendix D.

CONCLUSION

With Bitcoin's recent breakthrough of the \$10,000 barrier, its acceptability and popularity has drawn much attention in multiple ways. The present study is noteworthy in that three major perspectives were taken into consideration in understanding key driven factors behind Bitcoin's price fluctuation, especially the impact of both web search trends and social media. User opinions were identified from text analysis of Bitcoin forum's user comments. It shows that Bitcoin perception, investment value, cryptocurrency legality, China and Security are five major concerns among users. Both Google Trends and Twitter volume present correlation with Bitcoin's price fluctuation. Specifically, Twitter volume and Bitcoin price shows a strong positive correlation. In addition, the proposed forecasting model using web search component--Google Trends as an extra predictor yields better Bitcoin price prediction performance with the MAPE of 1.07%.

For future studies, we would like to explore more on the Twitter data with a longer extension of the time frame. Additionally, we plan to examine the coefficient between keywords of interest and Bitcoin price. Along these lines, the contribution of these keywords to Bitcoin price prediction would be worth investigation. Furthermore, we expect to combine different time series models with special events added to have better accuracy in prediction. We will also consider examining other financial assets on the bitcoin price so that we can control the impact of economic trends.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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APPENDIX A: DATA EXTRACTION

- Historical BTC/USD price data was pulled from:
 - https://www.kaggle.com/sudalairajkumar/cryptocurrencypricehistory/ data
- The dataset consists of the following:
 - Date Date of observation
 - Open Price
 - High
 - Low
 - Close Price
 - Volume Number of Transactions
 - Market Cap Amount of Bitcoin in circulation
- Twitter data was pulled using Twitter Archive add on with google.
 - Rules were created to run every 15 minutes and search for new tweets.
 - Below is an example of a rule created. Min_Retweets:5 was used to omit spam tweets from results.
 - Data was then combined, and duplicates removed in excel.

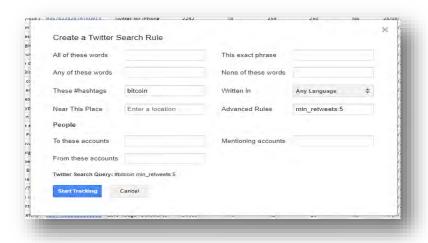


Figure 8.A.1: Setting for scraping Tweets in Google Sheet

• Bitcoin forum data was scraped the website https://Bitcointalk.org/. We have scraped the posts under the "Bitcoin Discussions" tab. The data ranges from October 2014 to October 2017. The data consists of the time stamp of the comment and the user comments on posts. The data was then cleaned to ready it for Enterprise Miner. Quoted comments from the comment column (where a user responded to another user and the original comment was brought into the new comment) and irrelevant posts (Rules of the page) were removed to eliminate duplicate records.

 Google Trends – Google Trend data was pulled using Google Trends filtering on Bitcoin and Date range of October 2014 to October 2017

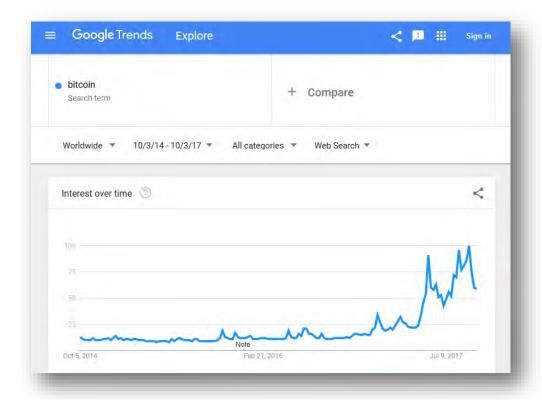


Figure 9.A.2: Number of searches on Bitcoin in Google Trend

• Twitter data was pulled using Twitter Archive add on with google.

APPENDIX B: TEXT MINING

Data was imported into the Enterprise Miner 14.2 and operated as shown in the following flow chart:

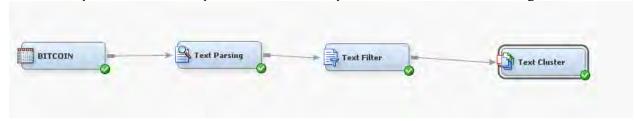


Figure 10.B.1: Enterprise Miner 14.2 flow chart

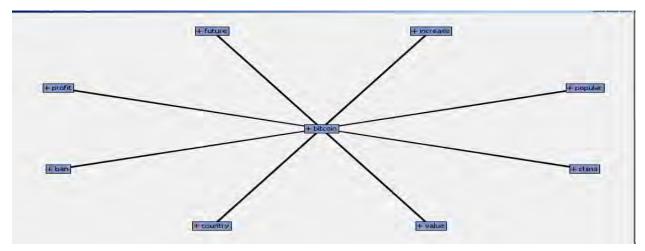


Figure 11.B.2: Concept Link of Bitcoin

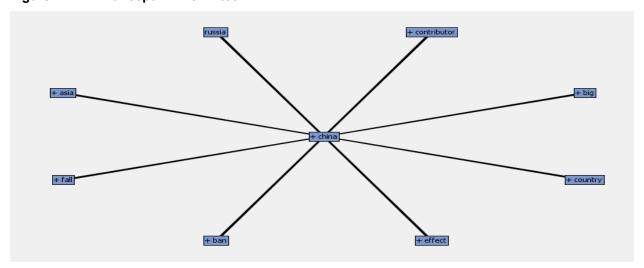


Figure 12.B.3: Concept link of China

APPENDIX C: TWITTER ANALYSIS



Figure 13.C.1: Pearson test for correlation between Bitcoin Price and Count of Tweets

APPENDIX D: TIME SERIES FORECATING

1. Studying the Time Series Data for Bitcoin Price

Our original Bitcoin data looks like this. The graph shows an explosive increasing behavior after Jan 2017 till present. To check the stationarity of the time series we can do a decomposition analysis to see if there are any seasonal or trends visible.

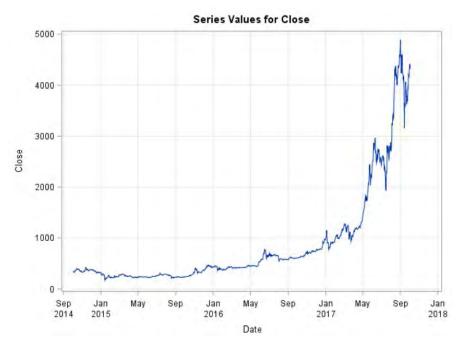


Figure 14.D.1: Bitcoin data Trend

2. A Decomposition Analysis

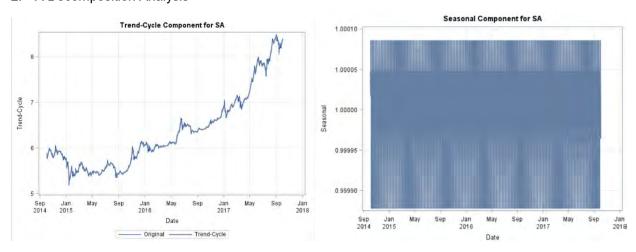


Figure 15.D.2: Decomposition Analysis-Trend Figure 16.D.3: Decomposition Analysis-Seasonal Here we can see that the time series has both a trend and seasonal component in its decomposition.

3. Identification of the Differenced Series

Looking at the Dicker fuller test for stationarity below we have p-values of tau that are greater than the 0.05. Hence, we retain our hypothesis that the series shows non-stationarity.

	Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root Tests									
Туре	Lags	Rho	Pr < Rho	Tau	Pr < Tau	F	Pr > F			
Zero Mean	0	4.2789	0.9999	2.75	0.9987					
	1	4.4936	0.9999	3.12	0.9996					
Single Mean	0	4.0068	0.9999	1.94	0.9999	3.79	0.0995			
	1	4.3552	0.9999	2.27	0.9999	4.86	0.0415			
Trend	0	0.2646	0.9973	0.09	0.9972	3.24	0.5262			
	1	1.0860	0.9991	0.38	0.9990	3.82	0.4086			

Figure 17.D.4: Dicker-Fuller test of Stationarity

To control the seasonal component of the series and the large p-values that we get in the augmented - dicker-fuller test we can understand that none of the *p*-values are small enough to cause you to reject the null hypothesis that the series has a unit root. It tells us the series should be differenced.

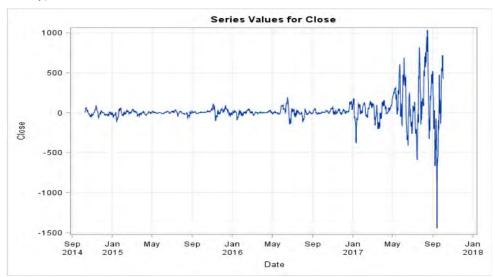


Figure 18.D.5: First Differenced Dataset

Here our series is seasonally adjusted. Next, we will try to control for the exponentially rising time series plot. We can do a log transformation to remove the trend component.

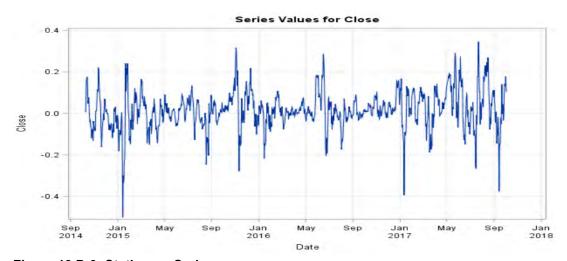


Figure 19.D.6: Stationary Series

There seems to be a stationary series now with no trends, constant mean and variance.

4. Estimation and Diagnostic Checking Stage

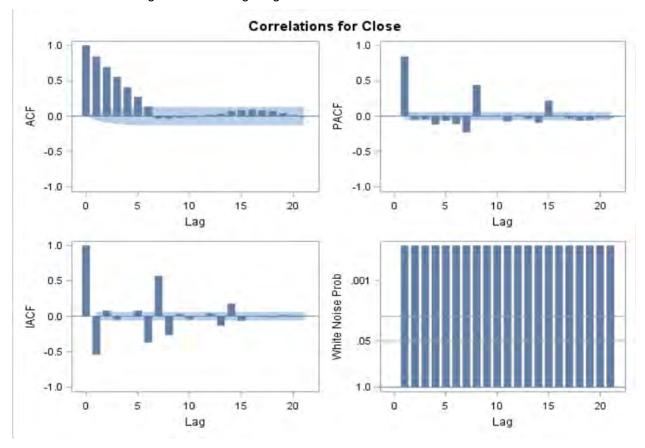


Figure 20.D.7: Diagnostics of stationary series

Looking at our ACF, PACF plot we can try to identify the estimates for the new stationary time series. The white noise probability graph also verifies our claim that the series is stationary and there is no white noise present.

The ACF plot tells us that this is an auto-regressive model which is slowly decaying. We can do diagnostic statistics to see if the AR (1) model is adequate. Other candidate models include an MA (1) model and low-order mixed ARMA models. In this example, the AR (1) model is tried first.

5. Estimating an AR (1,1) Model:

Maximum Likelihood Estimation								
Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Approx Pr > t	Laç			
MU	0.0022669	0.0010617	2.14	0.0328	(
AR1,1	-0.01125	0.03024	-0.37	0.7098	1			
	Variance I	Constant Estimate Variance Estimate		3				
	Variance I	Estimate	0.001263	3				
	Std Error	Estimate	0.035544					
	AIC		-4202.35	5				
	SBC		-4192.36	5				
	A1 1	f Residuals	1096					

Figure 21.D.8: Fit statistics of AR (1,1)

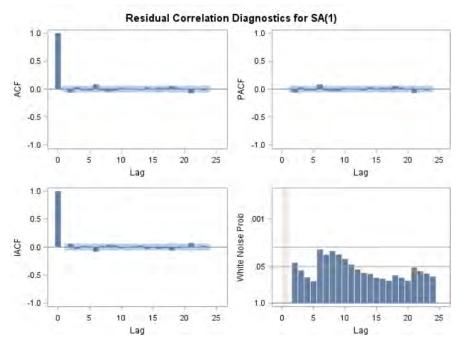


Figure 22.D.9: Diagnostics of AR (1,1)

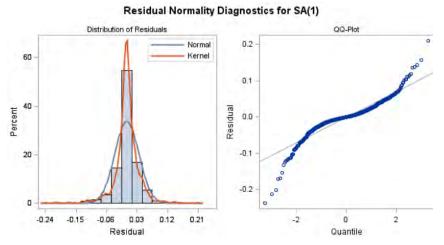


Figure 23.D.10: Normality for AR (1,1)

From the outputs obtained in the above model. The AIC is around -4202.35 (the reason we might be getting negative AIC values are that we have used log values for our modelling). When we check the residuals graph the white noise probability assumption is being rejected. Most of the p-values are greater than 0.5 i.e. there is no white noise available in the residuals. Here the model is inadequate, and we might consider adding an MA (1) part to it.

6. Estimating an ARIMA (1,1,1) Model:

	Maximum	Likelihood I	stimation		
Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Approx Pr > t	Lag
MU	0.0022714	0.0009991	2.27	0.0230	0
MA1,1	0.63315	0.50776	1.25	0.2124	1
AR1,1	0.60574	0.52250	1.16	0.2463	1
	Constant	Estimate	0.000896	5	
	Constant	Fetimato	0.000896		
	Variance	Variance Estimate		3	
	Std Error	Estimate	0.035542	2	
	AIC		-4201.51		
	SBC	SBC			

Figure 24.D.11: Fit statistics of ARIMA (1,1,1)

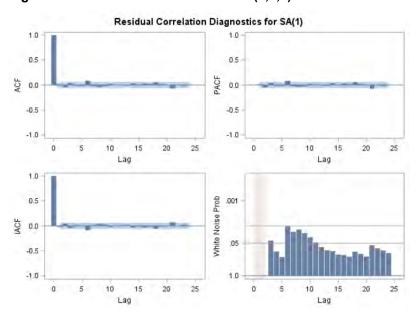


Figure 25.D.12: Diagnostics of ARIMA (1,1,1)

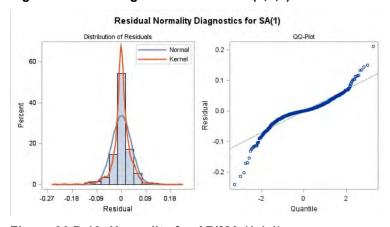


Figure 26.D.13: Normality for ARIMA (1,1,1)

In this model the AIC seems to have dropped to -4201.51. And looking at the residual panel, we see there isn't white noise present in the residuals. Again, we cannot use this model. The MA part isn't really improving our model.

7. Estimating an ARIMA (2,1,0) Model:



Figure 27.D.14: Fit statistics of ARIMA (2,1,0)

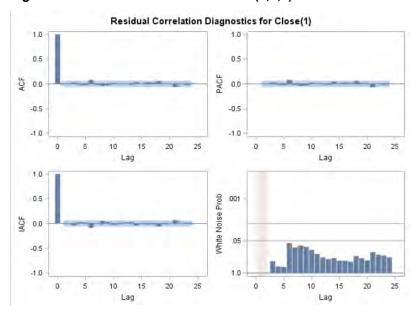


Figure 28.D.15: Diagnostics of ARIMA (2,1,0)

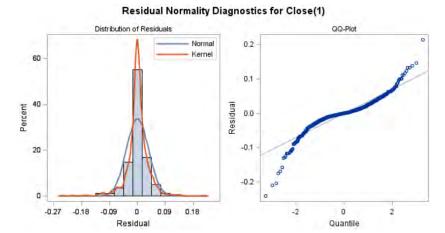


Figure 29.D.16: Normality for ARIMA (2,1,0)

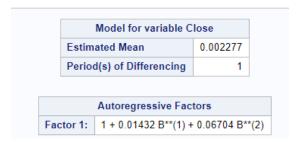


Figure 30.D.17: Model Equation of ARIMA (2,1,0)

Here we have dropped our MA component and instead increased the auto-regressive part. We have considered the MA (2) component. Here the AIC seems to have dropped again to (-4197.56) But looking at the residuals panel. We can see the in this case, the test statistics will not reject the no-autocorrelation hypothesis as all the p-values >0.05. The normality residual doesn't show a very satisfactory qq-plot, but we will ignore that for now and continue with this model.

8. Input Social Media regressor-Google Trends

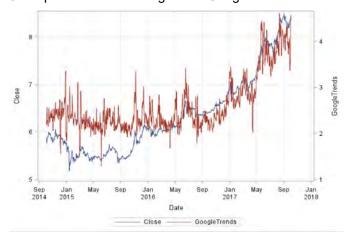


Figure 31.D.18: Original Data plot for GT and Bitcoin Price

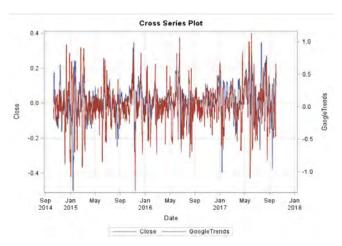


Figure 32.D.19: Stationary Plots

After we have decided on our ARIMA model, now we need to include an input series in this case as we are trying to establish relationships between social media and Bitcoin price. We have included the Google trends as our Social Media component. Looking at the above graphs. The first one is the plot of google trends for the same time frame Oct2014-Oct2017. It follows a similar explosive pattern like our Bitcoin price. It could be a reverse causality relationship. We will consider that by studying the Cross-correlation Plot of the price and Google trend. However, first we make it a stationary process by taking a log and a difference just like the way we had taken for Bitcoin Price.

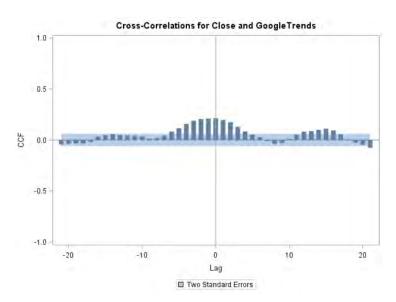


Figure 33.D.20: CCF plot for Bitcoin price vs Google Trends

LAG	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
CORRELATIONS	0.1902	0.2061	0.2109	0.2136	0.1961	0.1751	0.1239

Figure 34.D.21: Correlation values between the lags

On studying the CCF lag plots we can see that the max correlation is for lag 0 and the next best is for lag -1. Although these correlations are significant if we are taking a confidence interval of 98% else it can be ignored too. Here we understand the cross correlations for lags is higher than for leads. That means Bitcoin price is leading the google trends probably not by a very large margin but surely there is some amount of correlation at lags -1, -2.

To substantiate the claim Granger causality test is also carried out using Proc VARMAX.

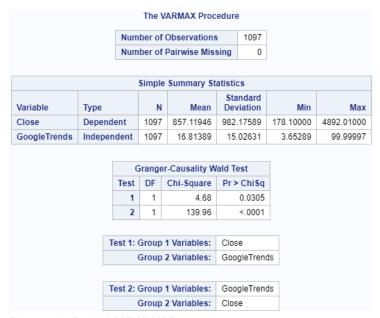


Figure 35.D.22: VARMAX Procedure

The null hypothesis of the Granger causality test is that GROUP1(Closing Price) is influenced only by itself, and not by GROUP2(Google Trends). The output shows that we reject that price is influenced by itself and not by Google Trends at the 0.05 significance level for Test 1 as p value is 0.03 and we can also reject that Google trends is influenced by itself and not by price for Test 2. Indeed, we can witness a reverse causal relationship between the social media component and Bitcoin Price.

9. ARIMAX model:

To see whether there is any significance of the google trend in the ARIMA model, we will consider adding Google trends as a regressor variable in our ARIMA (2,1) model. Here are the following results:

Maximum Likelihood Estimation								
Parameter	Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Approx Pr > t	Lag	Variable	Shift	
MU	0.0022686	0.0009935	2.28	0.0224	0	Close	0	
AR1,1	-0.01480	0.03021	-0.49	0.6241	1	Close	0	
AR1,2	-0.06814	0.03020	-2.26	0.0241	2	Close	0	
NUM1	0.0045369	0.0056631	0.80	0.4231	0	GoogleTrends	0	

	Consta	ant Estim	ate	0.002428	
	Varian	ce Estim	ate	0.001258	
	Std Error Estimate			0.035467	
	AIC			-4205.12	
	SBC			-4185.12	
	Number of Residuals			1096	
	Numbe	or ixes	iduais	1030	
C				r Estimate	
C Variable Parameter					
Variable		ions of P	aramete SA	r Estimate	es GoogleTrends
Variable Parameter		ions of P SA MU	aramete SA AR1,1	SA AR1,2	es GoogleTrends NUM1
Variable Parameter SA MU		ions of P SA MU 1.000	SA AR1,1	SA AR1,2	GoogleTrends NUM1

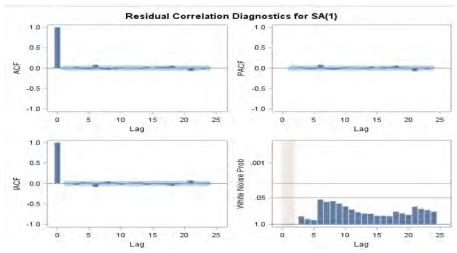


Figure 36.D.23: Residual Correlation Diagnosis for SA (1)

Looking at the estimates table we have the estimates of google trend very low (0.0045). Which means that with every one-unit increase of google trend the price gets effected by 0.4% which is very less significant.

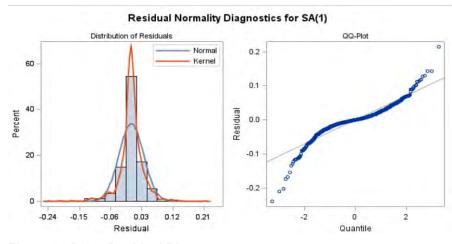


Figure 37.D.24: Residual Plot

Model for variable Close							
Estima	ited Intercept	0.002269					
Period	(s) of Differencing	1					
Autoregressive Factors							
Factor 1:	1 + 0.0148 B**(1) +	0.06814 B**(2					
Factor 1:	1 + 0.0148 B**(1) +	0.06814 B**(2					
Factor 1:	1 + 0.0148 B**(1) +	,					
Factor 1:	Input Number 1	,					
Input Vari	Input Number 1						

Figure 38.D.25: Model ARIMAX with Google Trend as regressor

Checking out the residuals for normality and white noise we can see the model fulfills all assumptions and is fairly a stable model. Its AIC is also greater than the above models. (-4205.06). We have also calculated MAPE (Mean Absolute Percentage Error) for all the above models to check if we are getting any other result.

Model	MAPE%
AR(1,1)	1.18%
ARIMA(1,1,1)	1.14%
AR(2,1)	1.12%
ARIMAX(2,1)	1.07%

Figure 39.D.26: Model comparison

It seems the ARIMAX (2,1) model inclusive of the google trends variable is our best fitted model with lowest MAPE% value.

10. Forecasting Stage:

Once we have satisfactorily decided on our time series model now comes the stage to predict our future Bitcoin price values. The SAS studio gives us this easy choice of running our models and directly forecasting them. The plot below shows prediction on the holdout sample. We have taken 12 daily samples as our holdout and 5 daily samples as forecast values.

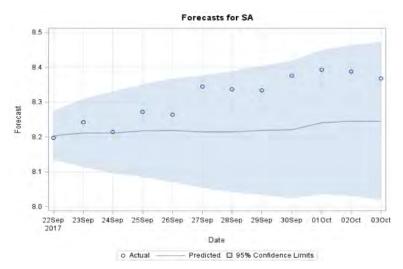


Figure 40.D.27: Forecast for Bitcoin



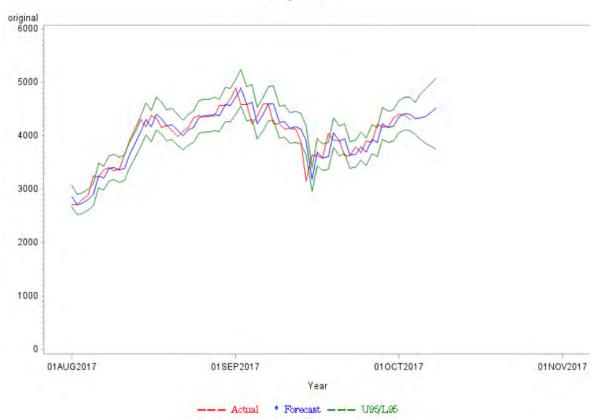


Figure 41.D.28: Actual and Forecast price of Bitcoin

The Red line in the above graph is the original Bitcoin price, the blue is the forecasted value. As you can see the forecasted values after Oct 3^{rd} , 2017 are well in between the 95% Confidence interval depicted by the green lines in the above plot.

Out of general curiosity we checked for the forecasted dates. As the analysis was done earlier we easily obtained the actual values for the respective 12 dates. We haven't used the model to forecast more days

as usually in ARIMA models the forecast starts approaching the mean value which would be ideally incorrect. Hence as the prediction is daily we used only 12 days as our forecast sample.

Dates -	Actual Values	✓ Predicted Values
4-Oct-17	4229.3	6 4324.26
5-Oct-17	4328.4	1 4242.72
6-Oct-17	4370.8	1 4362.88
7-Oct-17	4426.8	9 4435.53
8-Oct-17	7 4610.4	8 4520.97
9-Oct-17	4772.0	2 4640.87
10-Oct-17	4781.9	9 4790.78
11-Oct-17	4826.4	8 4810.56
12-Oct-17	5446.9	1 4956.98
13-Oct-17	5647.2	4980.19
14-Oct-17	5831.7	9 4981.34
15-Oct-17	5678.1	.9 4981.4
16-Oct-17	5725.5	9 4981.43
17-Oct-17	5605.5	4981.436
18-Oct-17	5590.6	9 4981.45

Figure 42.D.29: Table of Bitcoin actual and predicted price

We can say Indeed by using the Social component (google Trend) as a regressor in our ARIMA model we were able to get slightly better predictions and a mean absolute error of 1.07% which is lowest among all other test models we ran.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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