

Arbitrage on Limit Order Markets

Martin Šmíd, Aleš Kuběna, Peter Hron,...

ÚTIA, Czech Acac. Sci., Pod Vodárenskou věží 4, Praha 8, 182 08 Czech Republic

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Market Prices Are no Mystery

Arbitrage on Limit Order Markets

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Simple Market
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Fight with
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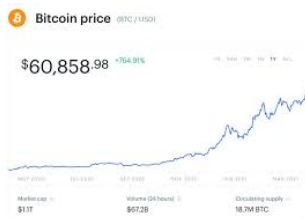
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 - **Complexity.** Practically we cannot compute optimal strategy.

The Key are Preferences

Agents' Preferences

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 - return \times risk
 - today \times tomorrow

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 - If there is a risk measure $\rho(\int d)$ (functional on the space of random variables) defined, then the ordering is complete
 - Usual risk measures are either
 - "theoretically reasonable" (coherent, time-consistent, etc) - e.g. Mean-CVaR, worst case
 - consistent with empirical evidence - e.g. Cumulative Prospect Theory
 - computable (single stage Mean-CVaR, Exponential utility)
- unfortunately not simultaneously.

Arbitrage - Are there Free Lunches Served?

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 - Rare in practice (if it existed, it would be exploited and thus vanished)

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Textbook argument: Irrational strategies run out of money and vanish from the market.

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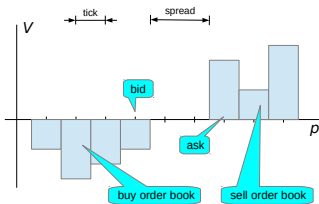
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(Too ambitious) Q: If everyone acted rationally, would arbitrage opportunities exist?

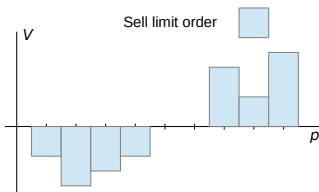
The F (how strategies are transformed to prices)

- On electronic markets (with a single commodity)
 - Offers = *limit orders*, containing
 - *limit price* - maximal/minimal price for which I am willing to buy/sell
 - *volume* - how much I want to buy/sell
 - Acceptances = *market orders*
 - *volume* - how much I want to buy/sell
 - naturally, the best limit orders are exploited
 - Market orders with plus/minus infinite price are equivalent to limit orders (we use this further)



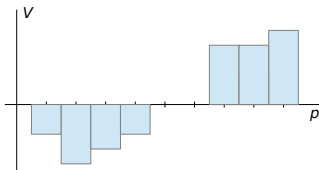
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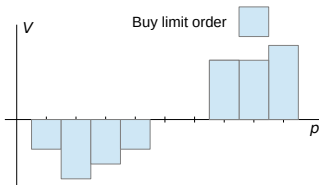
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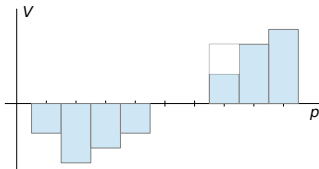
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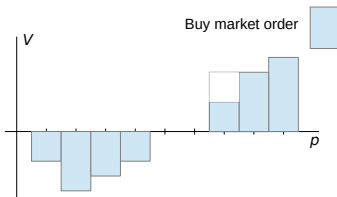
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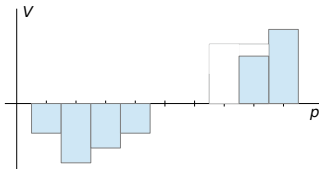
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(Ambitious) Setting

- N agents

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- i -th agent minimizes $\rho_i(\sum_k \gamma_i^k c_{i,k})$

γ_i - a discount factor

ρ_i - a nested homogeneous risk measure (i.e.

$$\rho_i(\sum_k \gamma_i^k c_{i,k}) = \rho_i(c_{i,0} + \gamma_i \rho_i(c_{i,1} \dots)) \text{ or}$$

$$\rho_i(\sum_k \gamma_i^k c_{i,k}) = \rho_i(c_{i,0} \rho_i(c_{i,1} \dots)^{\gamma_i})$$

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 - Constraints: money/instrument blocked when limit order posted
- $\Rightarrow V_i(m, n, \Xi) = \max_{(u,c) \in X} [c + \gamma \rho_i(V_i(m_u, n_n, \Xi_u))]$ (or mult.)

Back to the Earth (MŠ 2019)

Market

- 16 price ticks
- unit order volumes

Two "agents"

- A Zero Intelligence Trader
 - constant unit intensity of order arrivals, uniform on price space and types (buy/sell)
 - unit cancellation intensity
- A Market Maker
 - Simultaneously posts buy and sell limit orders (quotes), earns on spread
 - (very often) posts quotes – one buy– and one sell limit order, may avoid quoting
 - risk measure: nested Mean-CVaR or exponential utility function

Our Goal

- Optimal strategy of a market maker

Restrictions

- max 6 pieces of instrument,
 - max 50 units of cash (aggregated by 2)
 - max spread = 3
- ≐ 43000 states
- ⇒ about 20 non-zero transition probabilities
- $c_i \in \{0, 2\}$
 - max 2 pieces of currency consumed
- ⇒ max 26 actions

Solution method: Approximate Dynamic Programming

Solution

Procedure

- 1 Construct initial "naive" strategy (quote if possible, consume if money account overruns a threshold). By simulation, find the optimal threshold
- 2 Initialize $V(m, n, X)$ by values, achieved by naive strategy with the optimal threshold
- 3 Apply ADP (with 200,000 iterations)
- 4 Evaluate the resulting policy by simulation for initial state with 30 units of cash (25,000 times)

Solution details

- Coded in C++
- Solved for Mean-CVaR and exponential utility with various risk-aversion parameters
- A solution taking ~ 2 hrs, each policy evaluation ~ 30 min, on Core I7

Results

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Criterion	R.A.	Mean	CVaR	Min
Naive	0	174.835	156.006	
Mean-CVaR	0	222.526	187.25	
	0.05	208.322	176.11	
	0.1	181.234	145.98	
	0.25	2.230	-0.36	
Exp u.f.	0.001	220.928	187.249	
	0.01	221.992	187.713	
	0.1	184.050	144.247	
	1	8.354	-0.43	

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Surprise:

- No tradeoff between return and risk.
- Moreover, the "more risk-averse" variants are dominated except for the first two exp's

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Maker Problem

Fight with
Technical
Analysis

Problems Met

Future

Criterion	R.A.	Mean	CVaR	Min
Naive	0	174.835	156.006	
Mean-CVaR	0	222.526	187.25	
	0.05	208.322	176.11	
	0.1	181.234	145.98	
	0.25	2.230	-0.36	
Exp u.f.	0.001	220.928	187.249	
	0.01	221.992	187.713	
	0.1	184.050	144.247	
	1	8.354	-0.43	

Surprise:

- No tradeoff between return and risk.
- Moreover, the "more risk-averse" variants are dominated except for the first two exp's

Problem behind: Mean-CVaR collapses to worst case with decreasing time granularity.

COVID intermission (MŠ 2020)

- General simulation framework developed
(<https://github.com/cyberklezmer/marketsim>)

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Markets

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Research Q: Can "Machine learning" beat technical analysis?

TA - trading strategy based on analysing price trends

Market agents

Liquidity Taker Buys/Sells randomly for the current price(s) (perhaps a pension fund)

Market Maker Keeps quoting bid and ask according to Stoll [1978] (classics of MM decisions)

MACD Agent following a certain TA strategy

ADP Risk neutral ($\rho = \mathbb{E}$) "Machine learning" agent (uses ADP) maximizing profit from speculation (buying and selling at equidistant times)

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Results (by repeated evaluation of the strategies)

strategy	ADP	MACD	MM	LT
profit	120820	3161.01	-139221	15239.7
std.err.	36964.1	891.022	41760.3	6837.08

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Discussion

- ADP was able to learn from market prices (did not "see" the strategies)
- ADP out-performed TA
- Textbook MM failed to work (due to lack of knowledge of "fair price")
- ? Purely random LT earned significantly, maybe due to price increase (the last market price of the instrument was included into the cash-flow while in practice there is no guarantee it can be sold for that price)

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Because then we could use the Rockafellar and Uryasev trick and incorporate the CVaR to the expectation

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- $B(V) = \max(c + \gamma \mathbb{E} V)$ is a contraction operator (in sup norm) with fixed point

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Martin Šmíd,
Aleš Kuběna,
Peter Hron,...

Introduction

The Model

Simple Market
Maker Problem

Fight with
Technical
Analysis

Problems Met

Future

- With– or without risk aversion, we have

$$V(s) = \max_{(c,x) \in A(S)} [c + \gamma \mathbb{E}_Y V(S(x, c, Y))]$$

- $B(V) = \max(c + \gamma \mathbb{E}V)$ is a contraction operator (in sup norm) with fixed point
- ⇒ gradual approximation of V leads to (nearly) optimal solution, so what is the problem?

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- Large action space (order profiles)
- Large probability space (limit order may appear anywhere)
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Moreover,

- γ is close to 1 ⇒ convergence is slow

Problems Met III and IV:

Unknown Distribution

- As a resultant of dozens of strategies, the market is a quasi-random system.

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- ? But what is it when liquidity takers are price takers so market makers are free to determine midpoint price.
- (in practice, other markets and/or overnight auctions stabilize the price)

Last chance for ADP: Market Makers's Problem

- Recall: MM is obliged to keep two quotes (b - bid, a - ask)

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- Recall: MM is obliged to keep two quotes (b - bid, a - ask)
- ⇒ At least action space simpler:
- $$A(m, n) = \{(c, b, a) : b < a, m - b - c \geq 0, n \geq 0\}$$
- where m/n is the amount of money/instrument held.

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$$V(m, n) = \max_{(c, b, a) \in A(m, n)} c + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{D, C} V(m - c - Db + Ca, n + D - C)$$

where C/D is the fact of selling/purchase.

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- Simplification: distribution of C, D | state dependent only on $\Delta a = a - A$ and $\Delta b = b - B$ where A and B are best quotes of the others

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- Work in progress.

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 - The present version is not real-time, so it gives unlimited computation time to strategies
 - ⇒ Has to be refactored via threads

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Thanks for Attention!