

# Stock Price Prediction Using Technical Indicators: A CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention Approach

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**Keywords:** Stock Price Prediction, Technical Indicators, CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention, Financial Forecasting.

**Abstract:** As a matter of fact, on account of the inherent volatility and complexity of financial markets, predicting stock prices has always been a highly challenging task especially under the complex situation in recent years. With this in mind, this study explores the application of advanced machine learning models, particularly the CNN+LSTM+multi head attention model, to predict stock prices based on a comprehensive set of technical indicators. Based on evaluating the effectiveness of the model through various trading strategies and comparing its performance with other models, the results show that the CNN+LSTM+multi head attention model is significantly superior to other models in capturing market trends and achieving cumulative returns. At the same time, the current limitations for the models as well as improvements proposals for further study have been discussed at the same time. Overall, this study highlights the practical application value of the model in financial forecasting, providing a powerful tool for optimizing trading strategies.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Predicting stock prices has always been one of the most challenging tasks in financial markets, mainly due to the inherent volatility, complex interdependence, and the influence of numerous factors ranging from microeconomic indicators to macroeconomic events. Although traditional time series models such as Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) and Generalized Autoregressive Conditional Heteroskedasticity (GARCH) have been widely used in financial forecasting, they often perform poorly in capturing common nonlinear and dynamic patterns in financial data, especially during periods of market instability (Bollerslev, 1986; Sezer et al., 2020). As research deepens, new methods gradually enter the field of vision. In recent years, the rise of deep learning techniques, especially Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, has made significant progress in processing sequential data and modelling complex dependencies in time series (Graves, 2012; Greff et al., 2016), provided a new direction for financial forecasting.

In addition, technical indicators play a crucial role in financial forecasting, providing valuable insights into market trends, volatility, and potential price reversals. These indicators, ranging from moving

averages to momentum oscillations, help traders and analysts better grasp market sentiment and make wiser decisions (Kim & Kim, 2019). Therefore, by integrating a comprehensive set of technical indicators, not only can the multidimensional characteristics of the financial market be reflected, but the predictive accuracy of the model can also be significantly improved (Thakkar & Chaudhari, 2021). This method provides an effective supplement to the shortcomings of traditional models and marks an important progress in the field of financial forecasting.

In recent years, significant progress in the field of deep learning has driven the development of hybrid models, which significantly improve the performance of financial market forecasting by integrating the advantages of different architectures. LSTM networks are widely used in stock price prediction due to their powerful ability to model long-term dependencies and have shown better performance than traditional statistical methods in multiple studies (Siami et al., 2018). Based on this, the hybrid model integrating Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and LSTM demonstrates significant potential in capturing local and temporal features in financial data. Specifically, CNN excels at extracting features from short-term patterns, while LSTM performs well in handling sequence dependencies (Kim & Kim, 2019). This hybrid architecture enhances the ability to model

the complexity of financial markets by synergistically utilizing the advantages of two models.

On this basis, the introduction of self-attention mechanisms, especially in Transformer models, marks another important progress in this field. This mechanism allows the model to dynamically focus on the most relevant parts of the input sequence, thereby further improving the accuracy of predictions (Vaswani, 2017). The hybrid model combining CNN, LSTM, and self-attention mechanism demonstrates excellent ability in balancing short-term feature capture and long-term dependency modelling, significantly improving the accuracy of stock price prediction (Li et al., 2019). This multi model fusion method not only expands the application prospects of deep learning in financial market prediction, but also lays a solid foundation for building more accurate and robust prediction models. A significant innovation in this domain is the optimization of multi-head self-attention mechanisms. In traditional self-attention, all heads treat the sequence data similarly, potentially overlooking critical time-specific information. The optimized multi-head self-attention mechanism, however, allows each attention head to specialize in capturing different temporal aspects of the data. This not only enhances the model's ability to focus on relevant information at various time scales but also improves its robustness in volatile market conditions (Jialin et al., 2022). Integrating this optimized attention mechanism with a comprehensive set of technical indicators ensures that the model can effectively process a diverse range of market signals, leading to more accurate and reliable predictions (Fischer & Krauss, 2018; Zhang, et al., 2023).

Although existing models have made significant progress in predicting stock prices, there are still many challenges in dealing with the complexity and multidimensionality of financial time series data. The main objective of this study is to explore the potential of a hybrid model that combines CNN, LSTM, and optimized multi head self-attention mechanism in stock price prediction, particularly by

comprehensively utilizing a wide range of technical indicators to improve prediction accuracy and model robustness. The research object selected Apple Inc. (AAPL) stock, which is an ideal choice for verifying the effectiveness of advanced predictive models due to its high liquidity and extensive market analysis. By integrating multiple technical indicators and applying the innovative CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head self-attention architecture, this study not only aims to provide more accurate stock price predictions, but also hopes to bring new insights to the field of financial forecasting and promote its development. The structure of this paper is organized as follows: The next section discusses the data collection and preprocessing methods, followed by a detailed description of feature engineering and model construction. Subsequent sections evaluate the model's performance and conduct back testing through various trading strategies. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the key findings and suggestions for future research.

## 2 DATA AND METHOD

### 2.1 Data

In data analysis projects, data collection and preprocessing are the foundation of the entire analysis process. The accuracy and completeness of time series data in financial markets are crucial. The data analysed this time comes from the stock trading records of AAPL (Apple Inc.), covering multiple features such as dates and closing prices. The data mainly comes from various technical indicators provided by Yahoo Finance and ta lib library. The data range is from December 31, 2010 to December 31, 2022. It is hoped to predict daily returns and capture fluctuations in stock returns. In order to effectively demonstrate the characteristics of the data, one draws the closing price time series in Figure. 1



Figure 1: Closing price time series chart (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

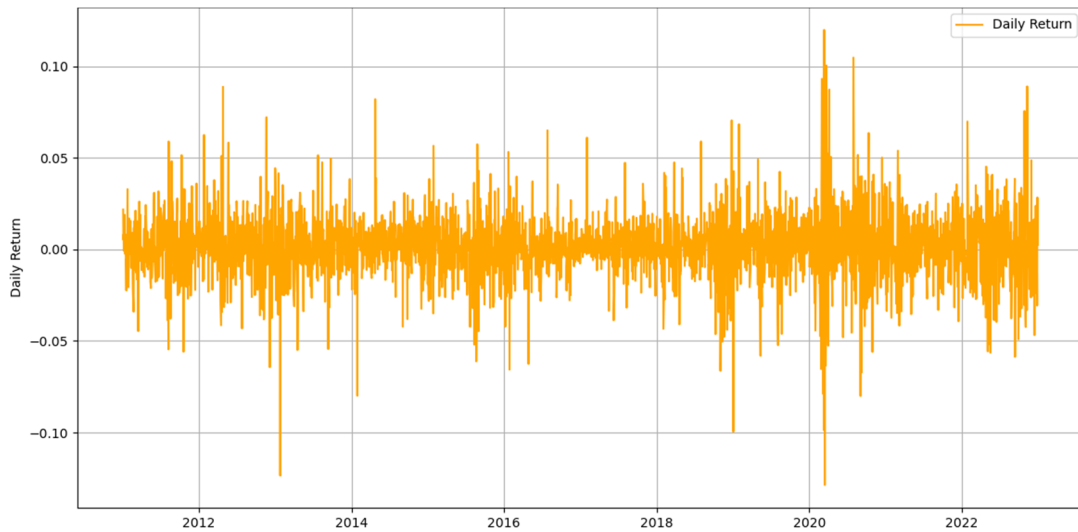


Figure 2: Daily Yield Time Series Chart (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

As shown in Figure. 1, AAPL's stock price experienced significant growth from 2010 to 2022. At the beginning of 2010, AAPL's closing price was relatively low, close to \$20. In the following years, AAPL's stock price experienced a steady increase, especially after 2019, when the stock price rapidly climbed and reached its peak at around \$180 in late 2021 and early 2022. The significant growth during this period reflects Apple's success in the global market and the widespread acceptance of its products and services. However, in 2022, one can observe a slight decline in AAPL's stock price, showing significant volatility. From Figure. 2, the daily return changes of AAPL stocks. Daily return reflects the percentage change in stock prices relative to the previous day and is an important indicator for measuring stock volatility. The chart shows that the daily returns of AAPL are mostly concentrated between -0.05 and 0.05, indicating that the price fluctuations of AAPL are relatively small on most trading days. However, there were also some extreme fluctuations, especially during the periods of 2014 and 2020, where there were significant periods of high volatility, with yields reaching above 0.1 or below -0.1. These extreme fluctuations are usually related to major market events or important news released by companies. Overall, the distribution of daily returns indicates that AAPL stocks experienced multiple periods of high volatility between 2010 and 2022, but overall maintained a relatively stable growth trend, which is why chose AAPL stocks.

## 2.2 Variables, Cleaning and Selection

In the original dataset, AAPL stock data consisted of 3021 rows and 284 columns, with some features containing missing values. One addressed this by removing features with over 10% missing data and using interpolation to fill the remaining gaps, resulting in a cleaned dataset with 276 features. For constructing the predictive target variable, one converted the annual risk-free rate into a daily return, calculated the daily stock return, and labelled it as 1 if it exceeded the risk-free rate, and 0 otherwise. The target variable was then lagged by one day to predict future trends. Furthermore, this study visualizes the distribution of the target variable in Figure. 3. It can be seen that the distribution of the constructed target variables is relatively balanced. The number of samples marked as 0 (daily returns less than or equal to the risk-free rate) is slightly higher than the number marked as 1 (daily returns exceeding the risk-free rate). This distribution indicates that during the selected time period, the returns of most trading days did not exceed the risk-free rate, but there were still a considerable number of trading days with returns exceeding this benchmark. This distribution feature is beneficial for model training, as an excessively imbalanced distribution of target variables may lead to the model's preference for a certain class, thereby affecting predictive performance. The relative balance of target variables will help improve the generalization ability of the model.

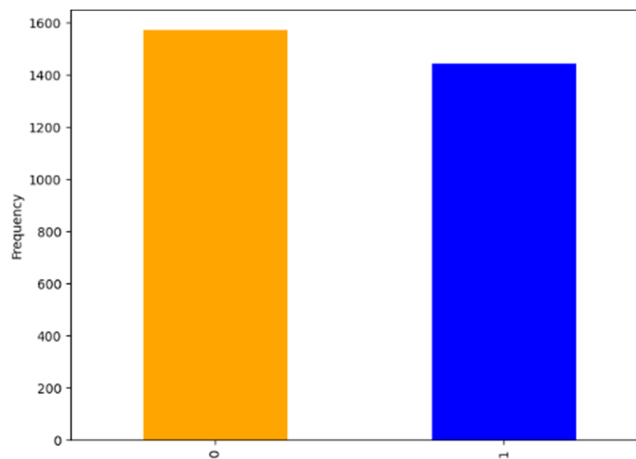


Figure 3: Distribution diagram of target variables (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

In time series prediction tasks, especially in financial data analysis, class imbalance is a common phenomenon. The number of days that AAPL stocks rise and fall may not be balanced, which can cause the model to be more inclined to predict more frequent categories during training (for example, the number of days that fall may be more than the number of days that rise). To address this issue, one performed the following operations to balance the class distribution of the target variable and improve the predictive performance of the model. One first calculated the sample size for each category in the target variable. Category 0 represents daily returns less than or equal to the risk-free rate, while Category 1 represents daily returns exceeding the risk-free rate. Calculating the weight of each category using the following formula:

$$\omega = \frac{N}{n_i \times K} \quad (1)$$

Among them,  $N$  is the total number of all samples in the dataset,  $n_i$  is the number of samples in  $i$ -th category, and  $K$  is the total number of categories. When training the LSTM model, this study passes these weights as class Weight parameters to the model. In this way, the model will adjust the learning of each category based on weights during each iteration, thus balancing the problem of imbalanced categories. After calculation, the weights are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Target variable weight table.

	1	0
Weight	1.0833	0.9286

This study applied a series of feature selection and dimensionality reduction techniques aimed at extracting the most informative parts from a large

number of features to improve the predictive performance and efficiency of the model. The entire process combines Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), K-Means clustering, and Self Organizing Mapping (SOM) to gradually optimize the feature set through a phased approach. The following is a detailed algorithm description. Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) is an iterative feature selection method that selects the most useful features for model prediction by recursively training the model and gradually eliminating the least important features. In this project, one uses Random Forest as the base model and use RFE to filter out 64 of the most important features from the original feature set. This step ensures that results are processing the filtered important features in subsequent steps, reducing the dimensionality and complexity of the data. After feature selection, one applied K-Means clustering to the selected features. K-Means clustering is an unsupervised learning algorithm that divides features into several clusters and groups similar features together. One selected 5 clustering centres and divided 64 features into 5 categories. The purpose of clustering is to identify feature groups with similar patterns or characteristics, in order to facilitate further processing. Within each K-Means clustering group, one further applied self-organizing maps (SOM) for feature dimensionality reduction. SOM is an unsupervised learning algorithm based on neural networks that can map high-dimensional features to low dimensional space while maintaining the topological structure of the data. Through SOM, one selected the most representative features within each cluster group, further reducing the number of features and retaining the most valuable information for model prediction. The flowchart of the feature selection method is shown in Figure. 4.

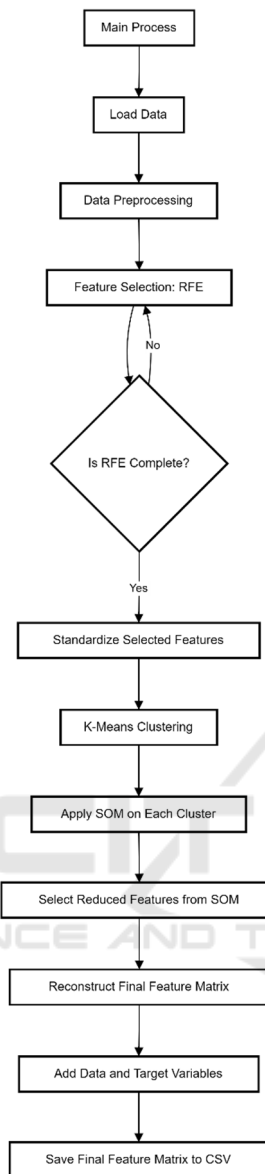


Figure 4: Feature selection flowchart (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

## 2.3 Prediction Model

The CNN+LSTM+multi head attention model is a powerful hybrid architecture designed specifically for time series forecasting, particularly suitable for applications such as stock price prediction. This model combines the advantages of convolutional neural networks (CNN), long short-term memory networks (LSTM), and multi head attention mechanisms, and can simultaneously capture local and global dependencies in sequence data, thereby improving prediction performance.

The CNN layer is responsible for extracting short-term patterns from the input time series data by applying convolutional filters. These filters help to identify local trends and fluctuations, which are critical for understanding immediate market movements. The output from the CNN layer is then passed to the LSTM layer, which is adept at capturing long-term dependencies and temporal relationships. LSTM networks are particularly effective in retaining information across different time steps, allowing the model to learn and predict future trends based on past data.

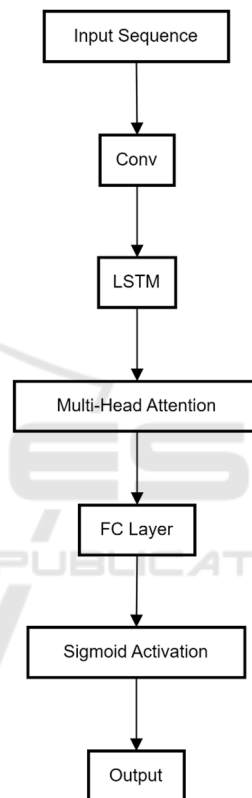


Figure 5: Structure diagram of CNN+LSTM+SA model (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

To further enhance the model's predictive power, a Multi-Head Attention mechanism is incorporated. This attention mechanism allows the model to dynamically focus on different parts of the input sequence, weighing the importance of various time steps. By doing so, the model can prioritize the most relevant information, improving the accuracy and robustness of the predictions. Finally, the processed information is passed through an output layer to generate the final prediction, such as the likelihood of a stock price increase or decrease. This combination of CNN, LSTM, and Multi-Head Attention makes the



model highly effective in capturing the complexities of financial time series data, leading to more accurate and reliable forecasts. The schematic diagram is illustrated in Figure. 5.

## 2.4 Model Evaluation

In this study, two main metrics were used to evaluate the performance of the CNN+LSTM+multi head attention model: confusion matrix and receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve. The confusion matrix is a commonly used tool in classification tasks, used to summarize the prediction results of the model in detail. It generates a table by comparing the actual results with the predicted results of the model, which includes the following four key sections:

- True Positive (TP): The number of samples correctly predicted as positive.
- True negatives (TN): The number of samples correctly predicted as negative classes.
- False Positive (FP): The number of negative class samples incorrectly predicted as positive.
- False negatives (FN): The number of positive class samples incorrectly predicted as negative.

This metric helps in understanding not only the accuracy of the model but also the types of errors it tends to make.

The Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve is a graphical representation that illustrates the diagnostic ability of a binary classification model by plotting the true positive rate (sensitivity) against the false positive rate (1-specificity) at various threshold settings. The ROC curve provides insight into how well the model can distinguish between the two classes across different decision thresholds. The Area Under the Curve (AUC) is a single scalar value that summarizes the overall performance of the model. The AUC ranges from 0 to 1, with a value closer to 1 indicating better model performance. The AUC provides a clear measure of the model's ability to classify outcomes correctly across all possible thresholds.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Feature Engineering

After performing Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), one used K-Means clustering to group the features. The Elbow Method indicated that 5 clusters were optimal, as the sum of squared errors (SSE) began to flatten out at this point, balancing detail retention with model complexity. Within each cluster,

the Self-Organizing Map (SOM) algorithm was applied to project high-dimensional features into a two-dimensional space, maintaining the topological structure between features. On the SOM map, darker colors indicated greater differences between features.

To select the most representative features, one prioritized feature mapped to denser nodes, chose the most central or relevant feature when multiple features were mapped to the same node, and ensured the total number of selected features was around 10. As shown in Figure. 6, the SOM distribution of the features helped us in selecting the most appropriate ones. This approach enabled us to select the 10 most representative features, balancing model efficiency with high predictive accuracy. In the end, this method helped us select the 10 most representative features from high-dimensional features, enabling the model to run efficiently while maintaining high predictive ability and accuracy. The Table 2 list the final selected features.

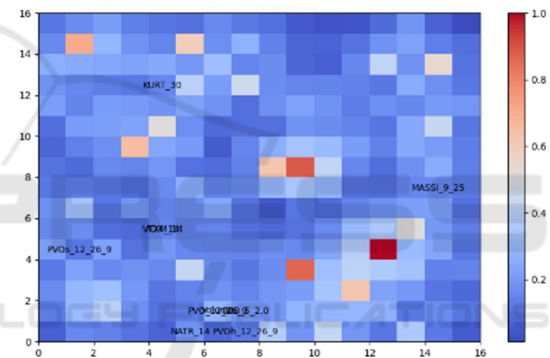


Figure 6: Som map (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

Table 2: Optimal feature.

No.	Features
1	Volume
2	ADX 14
3	BBB 5 2.0
4	KURT 30
5	MASSI 9 25
6	NATR 14
7	PVO 12 26 9
8	PVOh 12 26 9
9	PVOs 12 26 9
10	VTXM 14

In the correlation analysis, as shown in Figure. 7, the correlation between PVO12\_26\_9 and PVOs\_112:26\_9 exceeded 0.8. This high correlation may introduce multicollinearity, which in turn affects the interpretability and predictive performance of the model. To avoid this issue, one chose to retain PVO12\_26\_9 and remove PVOs\_112:26\_9,

simplifying the model and improving its stability. After exploratory data analysis, the selected features are given in Table 3.

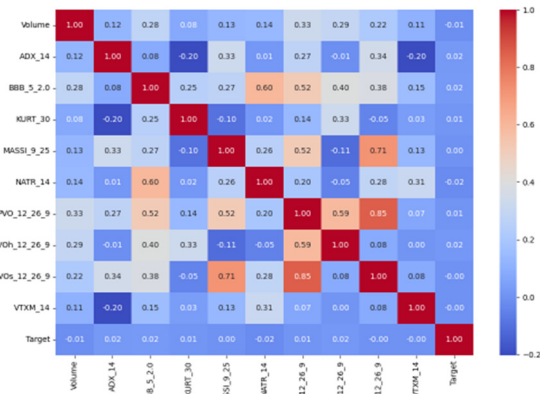


Figure 7: Correlation heat map (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

Table 3 Optimal feature table.

No.	Features
1	Volume
2	ADX 14
3	BBB_5_2.0
4	KURT 30
5	MASSI_9_25
6	NATR_14
7	PVO_12_26_9
8	PVOh_12_26_9
9	VTXM 14

### 3.2 Prediction Results

In the evaluation of the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model, the confusion matrix (as shown in Figure. 8) shows that the model performs consistently well in predicting both positive and negative classes. Specifically, the model correctly predicted 1092 true negatives and 1092 true positives, demonstrating its strong capability to distinguish between upward and downward trends. Although the model still encountered some false positives (311) and false negatives (431), its overall performance is robust.

The ROC curve (as depicted in Figure. 9) further highlights the model's effectiveness, with the AUC value reaching 0.833606. This indicates that the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model is highly effective in processing time-series data and extracting relevant features, enabling it to capture underlying patterns in the data and improve classification performance. In summary, the model demonstrates

high prediction accuracy and a low false positive rate, making it a reliable choice for stock price prediction tasks. The combination of CNN's local feature extraction, LSTM's temporal dependency modelling, and the Multi-Head Attention mechanism's focused feature selection ensures strong performance and practicality in this application.

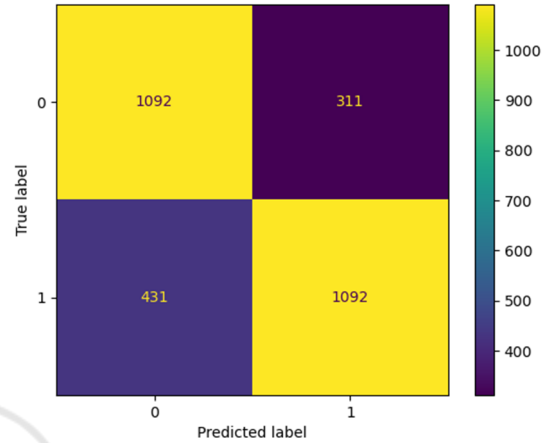


Figure 8: Confusion matrix (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

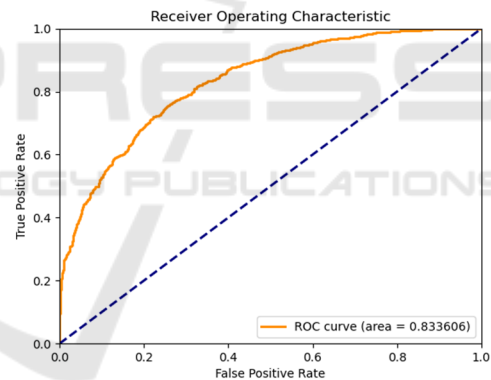


Figure 9: ROC plot of model (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

### 3.3 Trading Strategy

This study has designed two trading strategies to test the actual performance of the model predictions. Trend following strategy is a trading method based on price trends, aimed at trading by following the direction of market trends. In this study, the LSTM model and its variants were used to predict stock price trends. Specifically, one determines the trading behavior for the day based on the prediction results of the previous day's model. If the model predicts that the price will rise the next day, one holds or buys the stock; if the model predicts that the price will fall the next day, sell the stock at the market opening. This

strategy aims to generate profits by closely following short-term market trends. The core idea of the trend following strategy is to trade based on the predicted results of stock price trends by the model. Firstly, this study uses trained LSTM and its variant models to predict the daily rise or fall of stock prices. If the previous day's forecast result is an increase (1), then buy or hold the stock at the opening of the day; if the previous day's forecast result is a decline (0), sell or maintain a short position at the opening of the day. The daily earnings are calculated by the difference between the closing price of the current day and the previous day's closing price, while the cumulative earnings are the sum of daily earnings. The results are shown in the Table 4 and Figure. 10.

There are significant differences in the performance of the three different models in the cumulative return curve of Strategy 1, as shown in Figure. 10. The cumulative returns of the ordinary LSTM and CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention

models showed a stable upward trend throughout the back testing period, with the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model performing particularly well, achieving the highest cumulative return. This indicates its strong ability to capture market trends. The ordinary LSTM model comes second, with relatively robust performance. The LSTM+self-attention mechanism model's performance is slightly inferior; although it showed good revenue growth in the early stage, there were fluctuations and declines in revenue performance in the later stage. Overall, the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model performs

Table 4: Cumulative income statement of trend strategy.

Model	Cumulative rate of return
LSTM	298.68%
LSTM+SA	153.81%
LSTM+CNN+ Multi-SA	372.77%

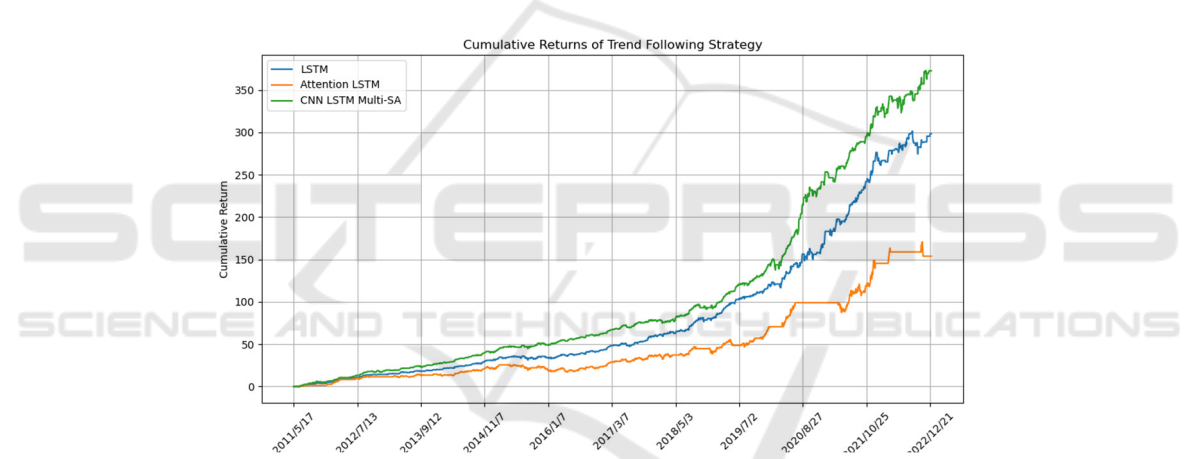


Figure 10: Comparison chart of cumulative returns of trend strategy (Photo/Picture credit: Original).

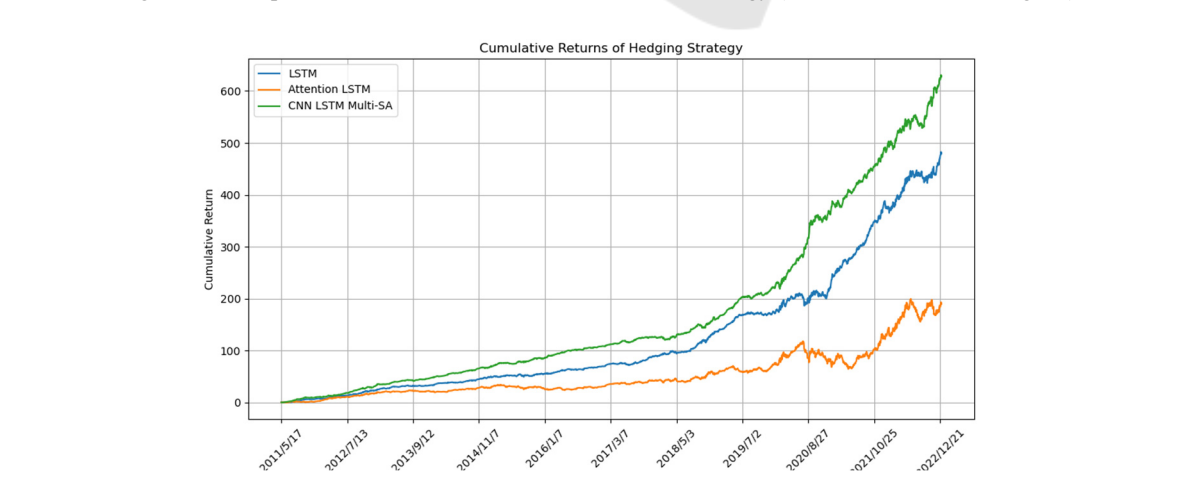


Figure 11: Comparison chart of cumulative returns of long and short strategies (Photo/Picture credit: Original).



the best in trend following strategies, demonstrating its superiority in complex market environments.

The long-short strategy is a two-way trading strategy that allows for long positions (buying stocks) when the market rises and short positions (selling stocks or holding reverse positions) when the market falls, thereby gaining potential returns across different market trends. In this study, the LSTM model and its variants were used to predict the daily rise and fall of stock prices, and corresponding long or short operations were carried out based on the prediction results. Strategy 2 adopts a long-short approach, conducting daily trades based on the model's predicted results. When the model predicts that the stock price will rise the next day, the stock is bought at the opening of the day and held until the closing. Conversely, when the model predicts that the price will fall the next day, the stock is shorted at the opening and the position is closed at the end of the day. The daily profit is calculated based on the position: for long positions, the profit is the closing price minus the opening price; for short positions, the profit is the opening price minus the closing price. Finally, by accumulating daily returns, the cumulative rate of return for the strategy is calculated to evaluate its performance in the market. The results are shown in the Table 5 and Figure. 11.

Table 5: Accumulated income statement of long short strategy.

Model	Cumulative rate of return
LSTM	479.10%
LSTM+SA	189.36%
LSTM+CNN+Multi-SA	627.28%

The results showed that all models significantly improved their cumulative returns under this strategy, with the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model achieving notably better cumulative returns than the other models. As shown in Figure. 11, throughout the entire trading period, the revenue growth of the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model remained relatively stable, demonstrating strong growth momentum, particularly in the later stages. Compared to Strategy 1, Strategy 2 takes advantage of market volatility by going long when predicting an uptrend and short when predicting a downtrend, thereby enhancing trading flexibility and potential returns. This approach allows the model to capitalize on profit opportunities under varying market conditions. However, the performance of the LSTM with self-attention mechanism remains relatively weaker, suggesting that the self-attention mechanism may require further refinement to better capture trend

signals. Overall, Strategy 2 outperforms Strategy 1 in terms of revenue performance, particularly when employing the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model. This model exhibits more stable and robust revenue growth, making it especially suitable for markets with high volatility.

### 3.4 Comparison and Implications

The comparison of the cumulative returns from the different models demonstrates distinct variations in performance. The CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model outperformed the other models, showing the highest cumulative returns across both trend-following and long-short strategies. This model's ability to capture both local and global dependencies in the data through convolutional layers, LSTM layers, and the multi-head attention mechanism allowed it to adapt more effectively to market conditions, leading to superior predictive accuracy and trading outcomes.

The ordinary LSTM model also performed well, but it lacked the robustness of the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model, especially in more volatile market environments. The inclusion of CNN and multi-head attention in the latter model provided additional layers of insight, enabling it to better recognize and act on subtle market signals that the LSTM alone might miss.

The implications of these findings suggest that hybrid models like CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention, which combine different neural network architectures, offer significant advantages in financial time-series forecasting. By integrating convolutional layers, which excel at capturing spatial patterns, with LSTM layers for temporal dependencies and multi-head attention for enhanced feature selection, this model demonstrates a comprehensive approach to understanding and predicting market behavior. As financial markets continue to grow in complexity, the use of such advanced models will likely become more prevalent, offering more accurate tools for traders and investors.

### 3.5 Limitations and Prospects

While the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model has demonstrated strong performance, there are inherent limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. First, the model's effectiveness is contingent on the quality and breadth of the input data. Any bias or gaps in the data could affect the model's predictions, potentially leading to suboptimal trading decisions. Additionally, the model is trained on

historical data, which may not fully capture future market conditions, especially during unprecedented events or structural changes in the market.

Looking ahead to the future, there are several research directions worth further exploration in response to these challenges. Firstly, by further optimizing the attention mechanism, the model's ability to capture market signals can be enhanced. In addition, considering integrating alternative data sources such as sentiment analysis data extracted from news reports or social media will provide richer background information for the model's predictions. Finally, extending the model to more asset classes or operating across multiple markets not only helps improve its robustness, but also enhances its applicability under different market conditions.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, this study evaluated the effectiveness of CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model in stock price prediction and trading strategy execution. The research results indicate that the hybrid model significantly outperforms traditional simple models in terms of cumulative returns, especially in situations of high market volatility. By integrating multiple neural network architectures, this model is able to effectively capture complex patterns in financial data, providing traders with powerful support tools. However, the study also exposed some limitations, e.g., dependence on historical data and high computational complexity of the model. Future research should focus on further optimizing the model structure and exploring more data sources to enhance the predictive ability of the model. Overall, the CNN+LSTM+Multi-Head Attention model demonstrates broad application prospects in the field of financial forecasting, with the potential to improve trading strategies and decision-making processes in complex market environments.

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