

A Study of the Impact of Moving Averages on Predicting Stock Market Trends: A Study of NIFTY 50

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Abstract:

The stock market is inherently volatile and influenced by many factors, making accurate trend prediction both challenging and important for investors and analysts. This study examines the effectiveness of moving averages—specifically, Simple Moving Averages (SMA) and Exponential Moving Averages (EMA)—in forecasting stock market trends, using the NIFTY 50 index as a representative benchmark of India's equity market. By analyzing historical data from 2010 to 2023, the research evaluates the predictive ability of different moving average strategies, including crossover events and trend confirmation signals. The study uses backtesting methods to assess the performance and reliability of these indicators in identifying potential buy and sell signals. A Paired Sample T-Test is performed to compare the performance of a moving average crossover strategy with a traditional buy-and-hold approach when predicting trends in the NIFTY 50 index. A correlation analysis is also conducted to examine the relationship between the NIFTY 50 index and its exponential moving averages (EMAs). The results indicate that moving averages can be valuable tools in technical analysis, providing insights into market direction and improving decision-making. However, their effectiveness varies depending on the timeframes and market conditions considered. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the role of moving averages in stock market forecasting, particularly in emerging markets like India.

Keywords:

Moving Averages, Stock Market Trends, NIFTY 50, Simple Moving Average (SMA), Exponential Moving Average (EMA), Technical Analysis, Market Prediction, Trend Indicators.

Introduction

"The movement of the stock market is governed by the very complex dynamics of factors from macroeconomic variables to investor moods. The prediction of the movement of the stock market has been an issue of immense interest among researchers, dealers, and financial experts. Among the plethora of methods applied to predict market movements, technical analysis has been of notable significance. One of the most frequent techniques applied in technical analysis is the concept of moving averages (MAs). They are the mathematical values applied to remove the short-term noises and detect the current trend direction of the financial time series data.

It is about identifying the impact of moving averages on trend prediction in the stock market, with special consideration for the NIFTY 50, which is the benchmark index of the National Stock

Exchange (NSE) of India. NIFTY 50 is the symbolization of 50 largest and most liquid stocks quoted in the NSE. Therefore, it is the most suitable candidate to identify the efficacy of moving averages in the prediction of trends. By appreciating the forecasting ability of moving averages, investors could become improved decision makers, take fewer risks, and enhance the performance of their portfolios. This research attempts to contribute to the list of literature that already exists by scrutinizing the performance of different kinds of moving averages—simple, exponential, and weighted—when applied to forecasting fluctuations in the NIFTY 50 market.

Technical analysis provides techniques of understanding the behavior of the market and judging patterns in price movements. Fama (1970) introduced the efficient market hypothesis, denying the predictability of price movements. But the research conducted by Lo, Mamaysky, and Wang (2000) challenged the view, demonstrating the effectiveness of technical indicators in the identification of market inefficiencies in the financial markets.

The moving averages offer the very foundation of the trend analysis of financial markets. Brock, Lakonishok, and LeBaron (1992) underlined the profitability of the simple moving averages (SMAs) and Majhi et al. (2019) proved the responsiveness of the exponential moving averages (EMAs) to the most recent price movements, making them ideally appropriate in highly volatile markets like NIFTY 50. New markets bring special challenges, like greater volatility and diminished liquidity. Bahl and Goyal (2017) emphasized the value of adaptive moving averaging methods in new markets, which is that the use of multiple types of moving averages enhances the detectability and adaptability of trends. The inclusion of moving averages in algorithmic trading has transformed the manner of executing markets. Gupta and Jain (2020) investigated their application in automated systems and demonstrated enhanced trade accuracy and profitability with the use of the indicators in algorithmic systems. To counter the deficiencies of regular moving averages, researchers have integrated them with advanced techniques. Tripathi and Aggarwal (2021) integrated moving averages with sentiment analysis and machine learning algorithms, achieving higher precision in prediction and reducing lagging behavior. Moving averages also play central roles in risk management techniques. Sharma et al. (2018) demonstrated the way stop-loss systems based on moving averages manage losses during turbulent times, highlighting the twofold role of moving averages in prediction and portfolio protection. Although they are useful, moving averages are far from being flawless indicators. Their lagging characteristic can cause sluggish responses to market movements, and they will surely generate false signals in range-bound markets. Chen et al. (2016) overcame such challenges and designed hybrid models that combine machine learning techniques with the objective of enhancing the validity of their predictive accuracy."

Literature Review

Nareshsarathy & Enllawar (2024): "Stock Market Predictions Using Moving Average and LSTM Techniques" (ICISML 2024)

- **Methodology:** Combines moving average signals with LSTM deep learning for forecasting stock prices.
- **Findings:** Hybrid model using MA for trend smoothing and LSTM for sequence learning showed strong performance, validated via MSE and accuracy metrics

Permana et al. (2024): “Predicting Stock Market Trends Based on Moving Average Using LSTM Algorithm” (CogITO Smart Journal)

- Method: Applies MA-derived features (e.g., SMA, EMA) as inputs to LSTM networks.
- Findings: Demonstrated that embedding MA significantly improves the LSTM’s trend prediction accuracy for stock indices.

Singh et al. (2024): “Stock market price prediction analysis (LSTM vs EMA)” (AIP Conference Proceedings)

- Comparison: EMA-based regression vs LSTM classification.
- Results: EMA regression achieved ~92% accuracy, outperforming LSTM (~84%), suggesting MAs can sometimes rival complex models.

Tadas et al. (2023): “The effectiveness of technical trading strategies: Evidence from Indian equity markets” (Business Perspectives)

- Scope: Tested SMA and EMA–RSI strategies across NIFTY 50 stocks (Jan–Aug 2022).
- Insights: SMA yielded net profits in 8/14 stocks; EMA–RSI in 6/14; but Bollinger Bands–RSI outperformed both

Sisodia, Nayak & Boghey (2024): “An Improved Index Price/Movement Prediction by using Ensemble CNN and DNN...” (Journal of Applied AI)

- Approach: Hybrid CNN-DNN using technical indicators, including MA.
- Outcome: Achieved ~97.5% accuracy on BANKNIFTY; demonstrates power of combining MA features with deep learning

Sivvala (2024): “Auto-Regressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) Model of Technical Analysis – NIFTY 50” (Journal of Financial Planning and Management)

- Focus: Compares ARIMA with hybrid ARIMA- LSTM and ARIMA- CNN for NIFTY 50.
- Conclusion: Hybrid models outperform standalone ARIMA, highlighting the benefit of combining MAs/time-series frameworks with learning models Tewari (2020): “Forecasting NIFTY 50 benchmark Index using Seasonal ARIMA Time Series Models”
- Technique: SARIMA applied to NIFTY 50; multiple model configurations evaluated via AIC.
- Relevance: Underlines importance of moving averages (implicit in ARIMA) and seasonal trends in forecasting.

Goel & Som (2023): “Stock market prediction, COVID- 19 pandemic and neural networks: SCG algorithm application” (EconomiA)

- Scope: Neural network forecasting pre- and during COVID- 19 with macro variables and SCG- ANN for NIFTY 50.
- While not MA-specific, it emphasizes the importance of robust trend indicators—including MAs—during regime shifts

Akash Deep et al. (2024): “Assessing the Impact of Technical Indicators on Machine Learning Models...” (arXiv)

1. Focus: Uses technical indicators such as EMA and Bollinger Bands to enhance Random Forest on high-frequency SPY data.

2. Finding: Indicators improved models but led to overfitting; price features remained dominant

Mittal, Nagpal & Chauhan (2022): "Impact of technical indicators in stock price prediction" (AIP Conf. Proc)

- Experiment: Various numbers and window of technical indicators (including MA) in ML models.
- Outcome: Increasing indicator count and window size improved prediction asymptotically, showing the value of MA metrics.

Rationale of the Study

"The NIFTY 50 is the leading index of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), and it comprises the 50 largest and most actively traded companies out of the eligible major sectors. Since its introduction in 1996, the NIFTY 50 has served as a significant measure in the performance of the Indian equity market and is very closely watched by investors, analysts, and traders.

Spanning 13 industries—banking, information technology, energy, pharma, and consumer goods—the index is representative of the total economic trends and structural shifts in the Indian economy. The constituents of the index, such as Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Infosys, and Tata Consultancy Services, are the giants of the sector with huge market cap and volumes.

The NIFTY 50 is the core of investment decision-taking and investment strategy design. It is applied during the process of portfolio benchmarking, the construction of exchange-traded funds (ETFs), and the trading of derivatives such as futures and options. Since it is highly utilized and value-reflecting, the index is utilized as an economic performance and sentiment barometer of the Indian market. Accordingly, an analysis of the predictive ability of technical indicators—such as moving averages—derived based on the NIFTY 50 index facilitates obtaining helpful insights into the trends of the market and more efficient investment decisions."

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the efficacy of moving average crossovers; Golden, as well as Death, Crosses in market trend identifications.
2. To investigate and analyze the nature of relationships between NIFTY 50 and EMAs (50-day and 200-day).
3. To investigate the Accuracy and Reliability about predictions made based on Moving Averages.

Scope of the Study

- Focuses on the historical data of NIFTY 50 index from 2010 to 2023 to study how moving averages, like SMA and EMA, help identify trends for buy/sell signals.
- Includes backtesting of moving average strategies for their application.
- The research scope is limited to the NIFTY 50 index, which comprises the top 50 companies listed on the National Stock Exchange of India and thus serves as a better indicator of Indian stock market performance.
- It does not consider other technical analysis tools or indices beyond the NIFTY 50.

Hypothesis.

H1: Moving averages have a significant impact on predicting stock market trends in the NIFTY 50 index.

H2: Exponential moving averages (EMAs) are more effective than simple moving averages (SMAs) in forecasting market trends for NIFTY 50.

H3: Combining multiple moving averages enhances the accuracy of trend prediction compared to using a single type of moving average.

Variables Under Study

- **Dependent Variable:** Stock price trends of the NIFTY 50 index.
- **Independent Variables:** Various moving averages such as Simple Moving Averages (SMA), Exponential Moving Averages (EMA), and their crossovers, including the Golden Cross and Death Cross.

Relationship of Variables:

The relationship between short-term and long-term moving averages is essential for identifying market trends. For example, when a short-term moving average crosses above a long-term moving average (Golden Cross), it usually signals a rising trend. Conversely, a Death Cross (short-term moving average crossing below a long-term moving average) often indicates a falling trend. These crossovers help predict potential trend reversals or continuations, aiding investors and traders in making informed decisions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

- The study employs quantitative analysis using historical price data of the NIFTY 50 index.

Sample Design

- **Target Population:** NIFTY 50 historical price data from 2010 to 2023.
- **Sampling Frame:** Daily closing prices.
- **Sampling Technique:** Time-series sampling.
- **Sample Size:** 13 years of data, approximately 3,300 trading days.

Tools for Data Collection

- **Secondary Data:**
 - **Time Frame:** Daily closing prices from 2010 to 2023.
 - **Sources:** National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) and financial data providers.

Tools for Data Analysis

- **Correlation Analysis:** To measure the relationship between stock prices and various moving averages (e.g., 20-day, 50-day, 200-day).
- **Regression Analysis:** To predict stock prices based on moving averages and other explanatory variables.
- **T-test:** To compare the predictive accuracy of different moving average periods (e.g., short-term vs. long-term).

Data Source Secondary Data:

Time Frame: Daily closing prices from 2010 to 2023.

Sources: National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) and financial data providers. Period Covered 2010 to 2024.

Time Series Analysis / Hypothesis Test / Financial Analysis

Time Series Analysis:

- A **trend analysis** of Nifty 50 from 2010 to 2025 was conducted using **EMA-50** and **EMA-100** to identify long-term market trends and volatility patterns.

Testing of Hypothesis:

- A Paired Sample T-Test is conducted to compare the performance of a moving average crossover strategy with a traditional buy-and-hold approach, in the context of identifying and predicting trends in the NIFTY 50 index.
- The test yielded a t-statistic of -1.271 and a p-value of 0.1079, exceeding the 0.05 threshold for significance. Consequently, we accept the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no statistically significant evidence to support the claim that moving average crossovers (Golden Cross and Death Cross) offer more reliable buy and sell signals compared to a passive investment strategy.

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	-0.150012305	0.126397696
Variance	0.506405303	0.91491999
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.175555813	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	24	
t Stat	-1.271024883	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.107950763	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.215901527	
t Critical two-tail	2.063898562	

Correlation Analysis:

A correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between the NIFTY 50 index and its exponential moving averages (EMAs). The results showed a strong positive correlation of 0.99 between NIFTY and the 50 EMA, indicating that the index closely tracks the short-term trend — making the 50 EMA a dependable indicator. Similarly, a correlation of 0.98 was observed between NIFTY and the 200 EMA, implying that the index also moves in sync with the long-term trend, supporting the effectiveness of both EMAs in capturing market direction.

Regression Analysis for 50 EMA:

A regression analysis between NIFTY 50 and 50 EMA showed a strong positive relationship ($R^2 = 0.9914$), indicating that 50 EMA explains over 99% of NIFTY's movement. The model is

statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that 50 EMA is a highly reliable indicator for identifying and predicting NIFTY trends.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.995691794
R Square	0.991402149
Adjusted R Square	0.991399951
Standard Error	35.12807487
Observations	3914

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	556631115.1	5.57E+08	451085.4	0
Residual	3912	4827336.191	1233.982		
Total	3913	561458451.3			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	41.09202906	8.271884444	4.967674	7.07E-07	24.8744158	57.30964233	24.8744158	57.30964233
X Variable 1	0.993436777	0.001479145	671.6289	0	0.990536808	0.996336746	0.990536808	0.996336746

For 200 EMA

The regression analysis between NIFTY 50 and 200 EMA reveals a strong positive relationship ($R^2 = 0.9658$). The model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the 200 EMA is a **highly reliable and effective indicator** for tracking and predicting NIFTY 50 trends.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.982751436
R Square	0.965800386
Adjusted R Square	0.965791643
Standard Error	70.0599774
Observations	3914

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	542256788.8	5.42E+08	110475.3	0
Residual	3912	19201662.5	4908.4		
Total	3913	561458451.3			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	140.7802957	16.41457369	8.576543	1.39E-17	108.5983654	172.9622259	108.5983654	172.9622259
X Variable 1	0.97839909	0.002943632	332.3782	0	0.972627891	0.984170288	0.972627891	0.984170288

For both 50 and 200 DMA

The combined regression model of 50 EMA and 200 EMA on NIFTY 50 is highly statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.9934$, $p < 0.05$), indicating a very strong predictive ability. While 50 EMA has a positive influence, 200 EMA shows a negative impact when considered together, suggesting that short-term trends (50 EMA) are more influential than long-term ones (200 EMA) in predicting immediate NIFTY movements. This highlights the importance of using both EMAs together for a balanced view in technical trading strategies.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.996677796
R Square	0.99336663
Adjusted R Square	0.993363238
Standard Error	30.8590125
Observations	3914

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	2	557734089.5	2.79E+08	292841.9	0
Residual	3911	3724361.809	952.2787		
Total	3913	561458451.3			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	46.09586231	7.268102003	6.342215	2.52E-10	31.84623424	60.34549038	31.84623424	60.34549038
X Variable 1	1.351504887	0.010601127	127.4869	0	1.330720627	1.372289146	1.330720627	1.372289146
X Variable 2	-0.36000603	0.010578134	-34.033	1.3E-222	-0.380745207	-0.339266845	-0.38074521	-0.339266845

Trend Analysis

Year-wise analysis of Returns of NIFTY 50 with 50-day and 200-day Exponential Moving Averages (EMAs) from 2010 to 2025, here's a breakdown of the EMA crossover patterns and their impact on trends:



- Golden Cross: When the 50 EMA crosses above the 200 EMA – signals a potential bullish trend.
- Death Cross: When the 50 EMA crosses below the 200 EMA – signals a potential bearish trend.

EMA Crossover Analysis (2010–2025)

Early 2009 – Golden Cross

- The market bottomed out post-2008 crash.
- 50 EMA crossed above 200 EMA in mid-2009 → A long bullish rally followed till 2010–2011.

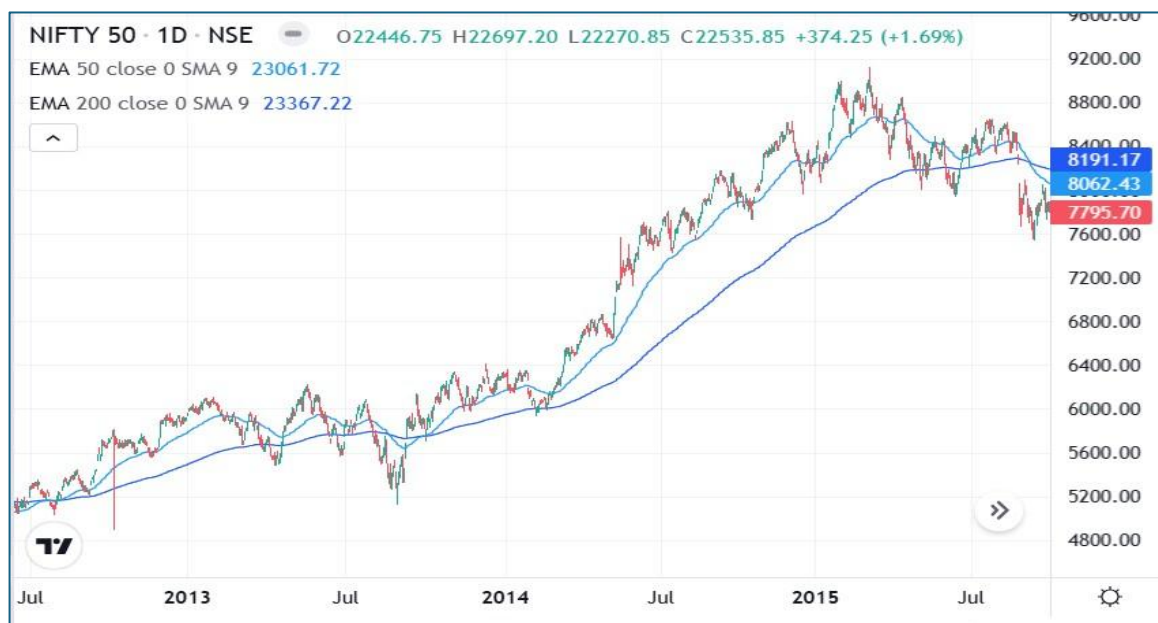
2011–12 – Death Cross

- 50 EMA crossed below 200 EMA → Nifty corrected briefly.
- This indicated short-term weakness but not a prolonged bear market.



2013–2015 – Golden Cross

- The 50 EMA crossed above 200 EMA → A strong bullish rally occurred from 2014 onwards (Modi rally).
- Nifty showed a multi-year uptrend post this crossover.



Early 2016 – Minor Death Cross

- Short correction, but reversal soon after.



2020 – Major Death Cross (COVID Crash)

- 50 EMA crossed below 200 EMA in early 2020 → Strong crash.
- Reversal: A Golden Cross appeared later in mid-2020, which triggered a powerful bull rally that extended till 2021–22.



2022–2023 – Temporary Death Cross

- Market corrected from all-time highs → 50 EMA dipped below 200 EMA briefly.
- Soon turned into another Golden Cross, supporting the rally into 2024–2025.

**Major Observations:**

Event	Type of Crossover	Market Trend After Crossover
2009	Golden Cross	Start of long-term uptrend
2011	Death Cross	Short correction
2013–14	Golden Cross	Strong bull market
2016	Death Cross	Minor pullback
2020 (COVID)	Death Cross	Heavy fall
Mid-2020	Golden Cross	Strong recovery & bull run
2022–23	Death Cross	Short correction
2023–24	Golden Cross	Bullish momentum resumes

Results of Applied Analysis

- Golden Crosses often precede multi-year bull markets, especially after significant corrections (2009, 2013, 2020).
- Death Crosses tend to signal short-to-medium term corrections unless driven by systemic events (like COVID-19 in 2020).
- In the T – Test applied, we accept the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no statistically significant evidence to support the claim that moving average crossovers (Golden Cross and Death Cross) offer more reliable buy and sell signals compared to a passive investment strategy, and there is no significant evidence that crossover improves returns.
- Correlation between Nifty and 50 EMA is 0.99, it means Nifty closely follows the trend of 50 EMA
- Correlation between Nifty and 200 EMA is 0.98, also Nifty closely follows the trend of 200 EMA, making both a reliable indicator.

- The Regression Analysis showed that the 50 EMA is a strong predictor of NIFTY 50 movements with $R^2 = 0.9914$, indicating over 99% explanation of price movements and high statistical significance ($p < 0.05$).

200 EMA also shows a strong positive relationship with NIFTY 50 ($R^2 = 0.9658$), but is slightly less predictive than the 50 EMA.

Combined regression ($R^2 = 0.9934$) reveals that 50 EMA has a positive impact, while 200 EMA has a negative impact when used together, suggesting short-term trends are more effective for immediate market prediction.

Conclusion

Our research concludes that while both the 50 EMA and 200 EMA are highly correlated with the NIFTY 50 index and serve as effective tools for identifying market trends, the 50 EMA emerges as a more reliable predictor for short-term movements. Regression results confirm its stronger statistical relationship and predictive power compared to the 200 EMA. Interestingly, when both EMAs are considered together, the 50 EMA maintains a positive influence, whereas the 200 EMA exhibits a slight negative impact, highlighting the dominance of short-term signals in immediate market prediction.

However, despite these statistical associations, the T-test results suggest that moving average crossovers such as the Golden Cross and Death Cross do not significantly outperform passive investment strategies in terms of returns. This implies that while EMAs are valuable for trend identification and timing, they should be used as complementary tools, and they work best when combined with other tools and careful planning.

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