# Introducing the MarketVector<sup>TM</sup> Crypto Heat Index



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#### **Contents**

Α	bstract	1
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Methodology	2
	2.1 Composite Structure	2
	2.2 Sentiment Zone	4
	2.3 Data Sources	5
3.	Competitive Positioning: The Heat Index vs. Legacy Sentiment Tools	5
4.	Backtesting Framework	7
	4.1 Signal Overlay	7
	4.2 Portfolio Backtest	9
	4.3 Performance Metrics	11
5.	Limitations and Risks	13
6	Conclusion	13

# **Abstract**

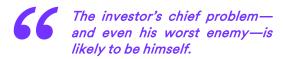
The MarketVector™ Crypto Heat Index is a proprietary, rules-based sentiment indicator designed to quantify market dynamics through **breadth** and **trend participation**. Unlike legacy measures such as the Fear & Greed Index, the Crypto Heat Index integrates multiple structural components into a single composite signal. By embedding SMA-based trend filters and percentile thresholds directly into the index, the Heat Index produces systematic rebalancing signals that can be used within institutional asset allocation frameworks. Empirical backtests demonstrate the potential for enhanced risk-adjusted returns, with the Heat Strategy historically outperforming a quarterly rebalanced benchmark by approximately 10% in annualized CAGR.

This whitepaper introduces the methodology, compares it to existing sentiment tools, and presents a framework for systematic allocation strategies.



## 1. Introduction

Institutional investors often face the challenge of balancing offensive and defensive positioning within their portfolios. Behavioral biases and emotional responses tend to exacerbate this challenge—encouraging aggressive risk-taking during favorable market conditions, such as leveraging to increase crypto exposure or concentrating in highgrowth sectors, while prompting defensive



**Benjamin Graham** 

actions, such as panic selling, during periods of market stress. A more disciplined framework that integrates both proactive offense and prudent defense can help investors develop a coherent strategy. Such an approach not only enhances consistency across market cycles but also improves the likelihood of maintaining adherence to long-term objectives during both favorable and adverse environments.

While traditional sentiment measures rely on surveys, Google trends, or subjective factors, the MarketVector™ Crypto Heat Index focuses exclusively on market structure: breadth, momentum, and relative strength. By doing so, it translates objective market dynamics into a sentiment indicator that signals both opportunity and risk.

The rationale for developing the Heat Index is twofold. First, digital asset markets are highly cyclical, with outsized moves often occurring at sentiment extremes. Capturing these extremes systematically can provide a significant edge in timing and allocation decisions. Second, existing tools either focus narrowly on Bitcoin or incorporate non-market data prone to noise. The Heat Index addresses these gaps by grounding its signal in the collective behavior of a top 100 crypto universe, ensuring robustness, transparency, and applicability across market regimes.

This approach ensures the indicator serves a dual purpose: as a descriptive tool for understanding current market sentiment, and as a prescriptive mechanism for generating allocation signals. For institutional investors, it provides a standardized, rules-based measure of market psychology usable for asset allocation purposes and for meeting fiduciary responsibilities. By grounding its signal in objective market data, the index offers a verifiable and repeatable framework for managing risk and exposure.

# 2. Methodology

# **2.1 Composite Structure**

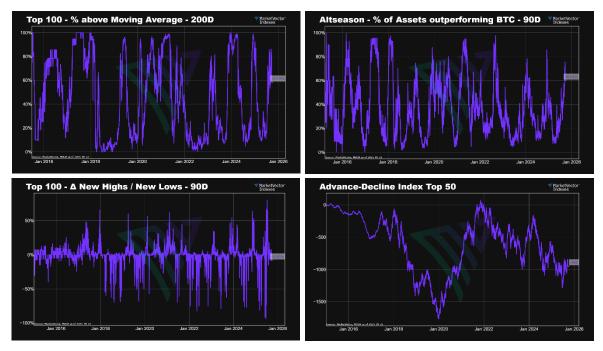
The Crypto Heat Index is designed as a composite measure of price behavior, aggregating several dimensions of participation and trend strength into a single normalized score. Each of the four underlying components are equally weighted and represent a distinct element of the crypto market's internal health:

- Percentage of Top 100 Assets Above 200-Day MA Captures the share of assets maintaining a long-term uptrend, reflecting overall confidence and staying power of bullish sentiment.
- Altcoin Season Indicator (All 100 Components) Measures the breadth of rotation into altcoins relative to Bitcoin, signaling speculative risk appetite when smaller assets begin to outperform Bitcoin over a 90-day period.



- Net New Highs (All 100 Components) Tracks the balance between 90-day highs and lows
  across all constituents of the MVDA100, providing insight into whether broad market
  participation supports or diverges from prevailing trends. The rolling 30 day delta of new highs
  minus new lows indicates whether an uptrend is underpinned by expanding leadership (more
  highs) or a downtrend is reinforced by widening weakness (more lows).
- Advance-Decline Line Slope (Top 50) Examines the short-term slope of advancing versus
  declining assets in the top 50 MVDA coins over a rolling 30-day period, giving a pulse on
  leadership breadth and whether market gains are concentrated or widely shared.

Figure 1: Breadth & Trend Indicators



Source: MarketVector

This methodology is grounded in classic, time-tested market breadth principles widely used in This This methodology is grounded in **classic**, **time-tested market breadth principles** widely used in traditional finance.

The Heat Index is constructed entirely from the constituents of the MarketVector™ Digital Assets 100 Index. This index is rebalanced monthly and dynamically reflects the evolving composition of the crypto asset landscape. As a result, the Heat Index is always calculated on the current top 100 assets, ensuring that it represents a real-time snapshot of the most relevant market dynamics rather than a static universe.

By combining long-term momentum, speculative rotation, broad coin participation, and leadership breadth, the composite index ensures no single narrative dominates the sentiment assessment. This construction reduces the bias of survey-only measures and instead captures how deeply participation runs across different segments of the market. Each component is mapped to a common 0–1 scale using robust min–max normalization based on the 5th and 95th percentiles to reduce outlier impact. After aligning dates, we take a weighted average (equal weights by default) to get a daily composite in [0,1], where higher values indicate broader and stronger market participation.



Importantly, these sub-indicators are not intended to forecast returns individually. Rather, their power lies in their combination: when they collectively signal strength or weakness, they reflect an alignment of market forces that often coincides with turning points. The equal weighting of components avoids overfitting, enhances transparency, and ensures that the index is sensitive to broad-based dynamics instead of niche drivers.

# 2.2 Sentiment Zone

Building on this composite structure, the Heat Index delineates sentiment zones to facilitate actionable decisions. The Index not only classifies sentiment into distinct percentile-based zones but also embeds systematic rebalancing signals. This logic is derived from a combination of percentile thresholds and short- vs. medium-term trend alignment:

- Buy Logic: A buy signal is triggered when the Heat Index is below the 25% threshold (Capitulation zone) and its 20-day SMA crosses above the 50-day SMA. This ensures that entry points are concentrated in periods of extreme pessimism with early signs of trend reversal.
- Sell Logic: A sell signal is triggered when the Heat Index exceeds the 75% threshold (FOMO/Euphoria zones) and its 20-day SMA crosses below the 50-day SMA. This ensures that exits occur during phases of extreme optimism that begin to lose structural momentum.

These rules are fully embedded in the construction of the Heat Index, meaning that the indicator itself functions as both a descriptive sentiment measure and a prescriptive signal generator. The moving average crossover helps to identify when trend and breadth in extreme zones is turning. The final Heat Index values, including SMA-based adjustments, are mapped into zones that carry direct allocation meaning:

0-25%: Rebalance up → Add Exposure

25–75%: Yellow Zone → Neutral / Hold

75–100%: Rebalance down → De-risk

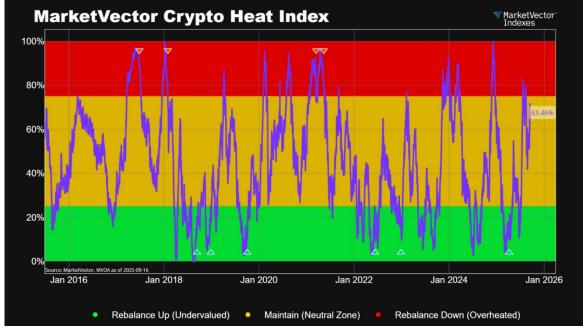


Figure 2: MarketVector™ Crypto Heat Index

Source: MarketVector, as of September 16, 2025

The rebalance triggers are indicated via the white triangles. The aim of the indicator is to capture the majority of the crypto cycles for long-term allocators; it's not meant to be a short-term trading indicator. A signal is just triggered if the Heat Index is in the extreme zones for a while and is showing a trend reversal via less breadth, weakening trend, less highs or lows.

#### 2.3 Data Sources

The MVDA Index draws price and volume data from reputable cryptocurrency exchanges, filtered by an exchange benchmark. Historical data for backtesting spans from December 31, 2014, to the present, accounting for monthly rebalances and excluding delisted assets to mitigate survivorship bias. All calculations are done once per day using the last closing prices. The sub indicators consider all index components on an equal weight basis. Data integrity is ensured through cross-validation against multiple sources to prevent anomalies from single-provider errors.

# 3. Competitive Positioning: The Heat Index vs. Legacy Sentiment Tools

This section explains the key differences between the Heat Index and other sentiment tools, backed by historical data, to help institutional investors evaluate its suitability for their needs. We focus on how the Heat Index's price-based approach provides a more reliable tool for decision-making in crypto markets compared to sentiment tools like the Fear & Greed Index, which includes subjective elements such as social media trends and surveys.



The Alternative.me Crypto Fear & Greed Index is widely cited but differs significantly in scope, methodology, and robustness. While it is a useful psychological barometer for gauging general market mood, it tends to lag real-time structure shifts and may be prone to noise from speculative or social-driven metrics. Social media sentiment is particularly susceptible to bot activity, influencer manipulation, and speculative "hype cycles," making it unreliable for the rigorous, rules-based decision-making required by institutional investors.

In contrast, the Crypto Heat Index emphasizes price participation, breadth, relative strength, rotation, and speculative trends, providing a structural sentiment readout rooted in actual participation dynamics of the crypto market. This makes it less susceptible to manipulation or hype, which can distort social-based indicators. This focus on replicable and transparent data is a fundamental advantage that aligns with institutional standards for verifiability and auditability.

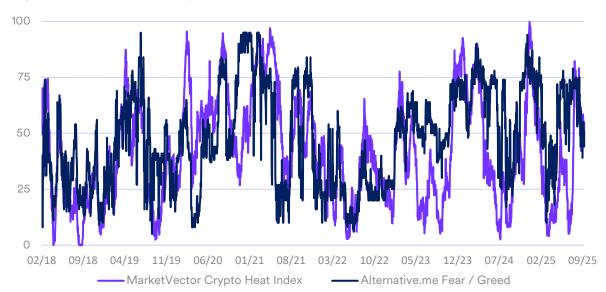


Figure 3: MarketVector™ Crypto Heat Index vs Fear & Greed over time

Source: MarketVector, https://alternative.me/crypto/fear-and-greed-index/, time period February 1, 2018 to September 9, 2025

While there is a moderate similarity between the indicators (correlation of 0.57), the MarketVector™ Heat Index often indicates extreme levels more frequently. This is especially important for investors seeking to generate rebalancing signals for asset allocation. The Heat Index's greater sensitivity (with a standard deviation of 23.5 vs. 21.6 for Alternative.me Fear & Greed) means it responds quicker to market shifts. By detecting more extremes and reacting faster to price changes, the Heat Index helps capture cycles without waiting for rare or delayed signals. A trend-based filter helps investors to identify key points where the market trend is still extreme but weakening, enabling proactive adjustments to crypto exposure (e.g., increasing in capitulation or reducing in euphoria).

The Heat Index is designed to serve as a systematic rebalancing tool, a process known as **volatility harvesting**. This approach positions the strategy not as a simple market-timing tool but as a systematic process of **buying low and selling high** by opportunistically adjusting exposure based on a rules-based signal. This framework is well-suited for a highly volatile asset class like crypto and is a compelling selling point for an audience focused on disciplined risk management.



Figure 4: Heat Index vs Fear & Greed

Feature	MarketVector™ Crypto Heat Index	Alternative.me Fear & Greed Index	Institutional Relevance
Scope	Top 100 Crypto Assets	Mostly Bitcoin-focused	Broader scope provides a more comprehensive view of market breadth.
Data Frequency	Daily	Daily	Both provide timely data, but the MVDA's inputs are more reliable for systematic decisions.
Sub-Indicators	4 market structure & price-based	6 mixed indicators (volatility, surveys, Google Trends, social, etc.)	Relies on objective, market-based data, which is more reliable and auditable than subjective proxies.
Breadth Coverage	Full market (Top 100)	Primarily price + sentiment proxies	Captures broad market dynamics and is less susceptible to singleasset manipulation.
Normalization	Quantile-based, robust to outliers	Static scoring system	The professional approach ensures the signal is balanced and not skewed by outliers.
Use Cases	Market timing, allocation decisions	General mood gauge	Designed for systematic, rules-based strategies that institutional investors require for repeatable processes.

# 4. Backtesting Framework

# 4.1 Signal Overlay

If we plot the signals against the MVDA Index, you can see that signals are capturing the cycle lows and highs for long-term oriented investors. These signals are intended to capture the larger bull and bear market cycles and are not meant as short-term trading signals. While we don't catch the absolute market tops and bottoms, the indicator effectively captures the top and bottoming ranges.

Interestingly, the last sell signal for the 2021 bull market was generated on May 13, 2021. The crypto market reached a new all-time high in November 2021, but accounting for that it was just a marginally higher high compared to May and the fact that investors would have avoided 50% interim drawdown in the summer, we think investors would have saved a lot of worries following the rebalancing signal. Also the November high was not met with market breadth which is always a red flag.



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Figure 5: MVDA Index and rebalancing signals (green = buy, red = sell)

Source: MarketVector, time period December 31, 2014 to August 31, 2025

The indicator doesn't catch the COVID-19 crash as these black swan events are impossible to catch as the velocity of trend and breadth changes are too fast. The Heat Index however can capture external shocks, as long as the market has time to digest. An example for that is the buy signal which was generated on April 7, 2025 which was an overall risk market low caused by the Trump tariff introduction on April 2, 2025.

The long-term effectiveness of the signals is shown in the tables below. While there can be short-term noise, you see that over a 2-year horizon the signal captured most of the upside or downside.

Figure 6: Signal Accuracy - Buy & Sell Signal Performance

Signal Date	Signal	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year
2018-09-12	BUY	-43%	-32%	26%	42%
2018-12-28	BUY	11%	155%	40%	359%
2019-10-03	BUY	-16%	-15%	33%	620%
2022-06-10	BUY	-17%	-32%	-14%	103%
2022-12-27	BUY	39%	46%	103%	306%
2025-04-07	BUY	29%			



Median		-2%	-15%	33%	306%
Signal Date	Signal	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year
2017-06-26	SELL	42%	470%	125%	158%
2018-01-31	SELL	-21%	-51%	-80%	-59%
2021-03-16	SELL	-9%	13%	-15%	-47%
2021-05-13	SELL	-27%	11%	-53%	-59%

Source: MarketVector, as of August 31, 2025

An outlier was the 2017 bull run, which was one of the strongest bull markets in crypto. We had a very violent drawdown in June 2017, which was followed by an even more explosive upside move. However, if you just rebalanced down to your model allocation, you still participated.

### 4.2 Portfolio Backtest

In our opinion, the indicator should be used as a rebalancing signal rather than an outright buy and sell decision. As crypto markets are very volatile, especially to the upside, it can happen that you sell or buy too early. If you use this signal to rebalance and manage your allocation risk, you are never completely out or all in, meaning you can use this volatility to your advantage. In asset management this process is called

volatility harvesting. It's an implicit buy low, sell high strategy.

This process is well suited for the index, as the aim is to capture bottoming and topping ranges, not single tops or bottoms. This section is just an example of how one could apply the Heat Index in asset allocations. For that reason, we will compare an active asset allocation model using the Heat Index to trigger the rebalancings versus a model portfolio, which rebalances quarterly. The model portfolio is based on liquid ETFs and our MVDA index, which serves as a proxy for the crypto market.

• Benchmark: Model Portfolio with fixed allocations and quarterly rebalance.

## **Model Portfolio**

	Global Equities (ACWI)	Crypto (MVDA)	T Bills (BIL)	Gold (GLD)
Model Portfolio	50%	20%	10%	20%

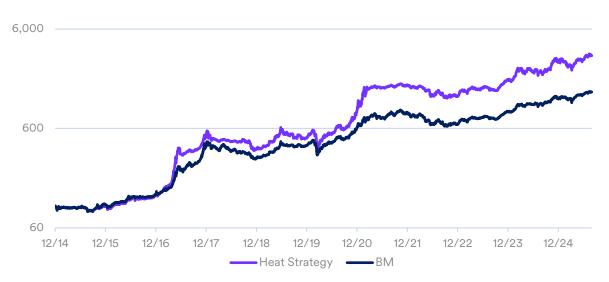


Heat Strategy (Using the Heat Index rebalancing Signals).

	Global Equities (ACWI)	Crypto (MVDA)	T Bills (BIL)	Gold (GLD)
Starting Portfolio	50%	20%	10%	20%
Risk-On-Portfolio	50%	30%	0%	20%
Risk-Off Portfolio	50%	10%	20%	20%

The benchmark and the active allocation model, our Heat Strategy, start with the Model Portfolio. Whenever the Heat Index causes a rebalancing signal, crypto will either be rebalanced down to 10% when we are in the Heat Zone or it will be rebalanced up to 30% when we are in the capitulation area. The allocation is taken or recycled to short-term treasuries. The backtest starts on December 31, 2014.

**Table 7: Cumulative Returns Comparison** 



Source: MarketVector, time period December 31, 2014 to August 31, 2025



12/16 12/17 12/18 12/19 12/20 12/21 12/22 12/23 0% -5% -10% -15% -20% -25% -30% -35% -40% -45% Heat Strategy ——BM

**Table 8: Drawdowns Comparison** 

Source: MarketVector, time period December 31, 2014 to August 31, 2025

## **4.3 Performance Metrics**

As you can see from the above charts, both approaches are doing extremely well. Of course, crypto is very beneficial to add to a classic portfolio. But what is eye-catching is that with the Heat Index you are adding over 10% of CAGR, while the drawdown and volatility are just 6% higher.

To provide a comprehensive view, key performance metrics include:

**Figure 9: Performance Metrics** 

Metric	Heat Strategy	Benchmark
Total Return	3126.64%	1293.32%
CAGR	38.47%	27.99%
Sharpe Ratio	1.19	1.10
Sortino Ratio	1.73	1.57



Calmar Ratio	0.97	0.84
Max Drawdown	-39.67%	-33.46%
Annualized Volatility	25.91%	19.71%
Longest DD Period (days)	747	825
Average DD Period (days)	38	27

Source: MarketVector, as of August 31, 2025

The higher Sharpe and Sortino ratios for the Heat Strategy, in particular, are key to the argument of enhanced risk-adjusted returns. While the Max Drawdown is slightly higher for the Heat Strategy, the superior risk-adjusted returns and the shorter Longest Drawdown Period demonstrate a more favorable risk-reward profile.

The allocation table below indicates the maximum, minimum and average weights for the Heat Strategy.

**Table 10: Allocation Statistics for Heat Strategy** 

Asset	Min Weight	Max Weight
ACWI	15.51%	56.73%
BIL	0.00%	22.62%
GLD	5.47%	25.26%
MVDA	3.88%	76.34%

Source: MarketVector, time period December 31, 2014 to August 31, 2025



## 5. Limitations and Risks

While the Heat Index demonstrates strong historical performance, it is not without limitations.

#### **Backtest Assumptions and Caveats**

- Black Swan Events: Rapid black swan events, such as the 2020 COVID-19 market crash, may
  evade detection due to the velocity of breadth and trend shifts exceeding the index's time
  horizons. The index is not designed to predict these events, but its rules-based logic can help
  mitigate their subsequent impact by preventing re-leveraging into a weakened market
  structure.
- Survivorship Bias: The backtest explicitly mitigates survivorship bias by using the MarketVector™ Digital Assets 100 Index (which accounts for monthly rebalances, ensuring that only point-in-time data is used to avoid look-ahead bias).
- Transaction Costs and Liquidity: While not modeled in the backtest for simplicity, real-world trading involves transaction costs and liquidity constraints. Users should consider these factors when implementing the strategy.
- Overfitting: The multi-component, equally-weighted structure of the index inherently helps
  mitigate overfitting by preventing any single narrative from dominating the signal. Overreliance on backtested results carries a risk, and it should be noted that past performance does
  not guarantee future results.

The Heat Index should be integrated with other risk management tools. Users should consider that the index is not a black box but a tool designed for integration into a multi-layered, holistic risk management system, which is the standard for institutional practice.

#### 6. Conclusion

The MarketVector™ Crypto Heat Index integrates breadth, trend, and SMA-based logic into a single, rules-based sentiment signal. Unlike legacy sentiment tools, it avoids subjective measures and focuses on objective market structure. Embedded buy/sell rules make it directly applicable to asset allocation frameworks, offering improved risk-adjusted outcomes and cycle awareness. As institutional adoption of digital assets accelerates, tools like the Heat Index will enable more precise navigation of market cycles, reducing behavioral biases and enhancing long-term portfolio resilience. As digital assets mature, institutional-grade sentiment tools like the Heat Index will play an increasingly important role.



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Jonas Weber is an emerging expert in digital assets and investment strategies. As a Digital Asset Jonas Weber is an emerging expert in digital assets and investment strategies. As a Digital Asset Analyst at MarketVector, he excels in generating innovative index ideas, building out the quantitative research infrastructure, conducting in-depth research, and supporting client communications. Before joining MarketVector, Jonas honed his skills as a working student in Investment Consulting. At Lurse AG, a pension consultancy firm, he was instrumental in developing new investment strategies and analyzing the risk and performance of model portfolios. His collaboration with Lurse AG also extended to his master's thesis, which he completed summa cum laude, focusing on various investment strategies and deriving optimal guarantee levels.



#### IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS AND DISCLOSURES

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