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Quantity-setting games with a dominant firm

Attila Tasnádi

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Abstract We consider a possible game-theoretic foundation of Forchheimer's model of dominant-firm price leadership based on quantity-setting games with one large firm and many small firms. If the large firm is the exogenously given first mover, we obtain Forchheimer's model. We also investigate whether the large firm can emerge as a first mover of a timing game.

Keywords Forchheimer, dominant firm, price leadership

JEL Classifications D43, L13

1 Introduction

In Forchheimer's model of dominant-firm price leadership (see for example Scherer and Ross, 1990, p. 221) it is assumed that there is one large and many small firms. The large firm is assumed to determine the price in the market and the firms in the competitive fringe act as price takers. Therefore, the large producer sets its price by maximizing profit subject to its residual demand curve. More specifically, the large firm's residual demand curve can be obtained as

A. Tasnádi

Department of Mathematics, Corvinus University of Budapest, H-1093 Budapest, Fővám tér 8, Hungary

Tel.: +36-1-4827442

Fax: +36-1-4827430

E-mail: attila.tasnadi@uni-corvinus.hu

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the horizontal difference of the demand curve and the aggregate supply curve of the competitive fringe. However, this usual description of Forchheimer's model is not derived from the firms' individual profit maximization behavior.

Ono (1982) provided a theoretical analysis of price leadership by investigating a model in which one firm sets the market price, the remaining firms choose their outputs and the price setter serves the residual demand. Hence, one firm uses price as its strategic variable while the remaining firms use quantity as their strategic variable. Under these circumstances Ono demonstrated that there is a firm that accepts the role of the price setter, while the remaining firms prefer to set their quantities. However, Ono leaves open the questions of why the price-setting firm serves the residual demand and why there is just one price-setting firm in the market (since these are assumed in Ono's model).

A complete price-setting game-theoretic foundation of dominant-firm price leadership was given by Deneckere and Kovenock (1992) in the framework of a capacity-constrained Bertrand-Edgeworth duopoly game. Tasnádi (2000) provides another game-theoretic foundation of Forchheimer's model, based on a price-setting game with one large firm and a nonatomic fringe in which all firms have strictly convex cost functions. In a follow-up paper Tasnádi (2004) shows that for the case of strictly convex cost functions, the large firm will not accept the role of the leader in a simple two-period timing game.²

In this paper we seek a game-theoretic foundation of the dominant-firm model of price leadership based on quantity-setting games; but in this case the term "price leadership" may not be appropriate since we use quantity as the strategic variable. Nevertheless, we will establish that if the large firm is the exogenously specified first mover and there are sufficiently many "almost negligible" small firms moving second, then equilibrium price and aggregate production of the two-stage quantity-setting game will be very close to the dominant firm price and the Forchheimer market output, respectively.³ To show this type of convergence result we will consider a sequence of two-stage quantity-setting games, all having the same efficient firm and an increasing number of less efficient firms, where the total competitive supply of the less-efficient firms remain the same in each market. Hence, an oligopoly market of the sequence is not obtained from another oligopoly market by the entry of new firms.

We find that the quantities of the appropriate sequence of quantity-setting two-stage games will converge to the same values determined by the dominant-firm model of price leadership (Proposition 1).⁴ Thus, a kind of game-theoretic foundation of Forchheimer's dominant-firm model can be given by two-stage

² We refer to Rassenti and Wilson (2004) for an experimental investigation of the dominant-firm model of price leadership.

³ Purely sequential-move quantity-setting games with identical firms have been investigated from a different viewpoint by Robson (1990) and Anderson and Engers (1992).

⁴ Tesoriere (2008) shows for a market with infinitely many quantity-setting firms, in which the firms have identical and linear cost functions, that only first movers produce a positive amount. Of course, his findings cannot support Forchheimer's model since because of the symmetric setting there is no firm with a clear cost advantage.

quantity-setting games. A similar result has been obtained by Sadanand and Sadanand (1996) in the presence of a sufficiently small but nonvanishing amount of demand uncertainty in a market with one large firm and a continuum of identical small firms.⁵ In this respect, the present paper relaxes the assumptions of identical and infinitely many small firms.

Concerning the endogenous timing of moves, Sadanand and Sadanand (1996) mention in the proof of their Proposition 3 for the deterministic case that the large firm still could be the endogenous quantity leader in the market, but unfortunately this equilibrium outcome of the timing game does not remain unique. This paper adds to Sadanand and Sadanand by showing that nonvanishing demand uncertainty and a continuum of small firms play a crucial role in obtaining the large firm as the endogenous leader (Proposition 2). In particular, most of the small firms do not want to accept the role of the follower.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we describe the framework of our analysis. Section 3 presents a game-theoretic foundation of dominant-firm price leadership based on quantity-setting games, while Section 4 shows that the exogenously given order of moves in Section 3 cannot be endogenized. Finally, Section 5 contains concluding remarks.

2 The framework

The demand is given by the function $D : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$ on which we impose the following assumptions in order to ensure the existence of equilibrium in the oligopoly games:

Assumption 1 There exists a positive price b such that $D(p) > 0$ if $p < b$, and $D(p) = 0$ if $p \geq b$. The demand function D is strictly decreasing on $[0, b]$, twice continuously differentiable on $(0, b)$ and concave on $[0, b]$.

Let a be the horizontal intercept of the demand function, i.e., $D(0) = a$. Clearly, the firms will not produce more than a . Let us denote by P the inverse demand function; that is, $P(0) = b$, $P(q) = D^{-1}(q)$ for all $q \in (0, a)$, and $P(q) = 0$ for all $q \geq a$.

The result in Section 3 will be asymptotic in nature and therefore, we will consider a sequence of oligopoly markets $O = (O^n)_{n=1}^{\infty}$. The demand function D is assumed to be the same in every oligopoly market of the sequence O . The cost, marginal cost and supply functions in the oligopoly market O^n will be denoted by $c_i^n : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$, $mc_i^n : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$ and $s_i^n : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$, respectively ($i \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$). Thus, the n th oligopoly market of the sequence O is described by $O^n = \langle \{0, 1, \dots, n\}, (c_0^n, c_1^n, \dots, c_n^n), D \rangle$, where n stands for the number of second movers in case of one exogenously given first mover. We shall denote by \mathbb{N} the set of positive integers.

⁵ For a recent contribution on quantity-setting timing games with demand uncertainty see Caron and Lafay (2008).

In order to ensure the existence and at some points also the uniqueness of the equilibrium through our analysis we impose on the firms' cost functions the following assumptions:

Assumption 2 The cost functions c_i^n are twice continuously differentiable, there are no fixed costs and the cost functions are strictly increasing and strictly convex. Furthermore, $(c_i^n)'(0) = \lim_{q \rightarrow 0^+} (c_i^n)'(q) = mc_i^n(0) = 0$ and $\lim_{q \rightarrow \infty} mc_i^n(q) = \infty$ for all $i \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$.

Assumption 2 implies that the competitive supply, henceforth briefly supply, at price level p of firm i can be given by $s_i^n(p) := (mc_i^n)^{-1}(p)$ because the supply of firm i at price level p is a solution of the problem $s_i^n(p) = \arg \max_{q \geq 0} pq - c_i^n(q)$, which has a unique solution for all $p \geq 0$ because of Assumption 2.

So far we have not made any distinction between the firms. We call firm 0 the large firm and the remaining firms small firms. The usage of this terminology is justified by the following two assumptions.

Assumption 3 The (competitive) supply of firm 0 as well as the aggregate (competitive) supply of firms $1, \dots, n$ remain the same in every oligopoly market of the sequence O . Hence, we can denote by $s_0 = s_0^n$ the supply of the large firm, by $c_0 = c_0^n$ the cost function of the large firm, by $S_c = \sum_{i=1}^n s_i^n$ the aggregate supply of the small firms and by $MC_c := S_c^{-1}$ its inverse.

Assumption 4 There exists a positive real value α such that

$$s_i^n(p) < \frac{\alpha}{n} S_c(p)$$

holds true for any $p \in (0, b]$, for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and for any firm $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$.

Assumptions 3 and 4 jointly imply that by considering an oligopoly market O^n with a sufficiently large index n , the supply of any small firm can be regarded as 'almost negligible' compared to the large firm's supply. This justifies the qualifiers large and small.

We want to emphasize that we do not investigate the case of free entry. Clearly, considering a fixed oligopoly market O^n and a potential entrant labeled $n+1$ with a given cost function c_{n+1}^n satisfying Assumption 2, firm $n+1$ would always enter since it can make positive profits. In particular, two different oligopoly markets O^{n_1} and O^{n_2} out of the same sequence of oligopoly markets $(O^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ are just two different technological scenarios in which large firms have identical supply functions and sets of small firms have identical aggregate supply functions.

It should be mentioned that Anderson and Engers (1994) have developed a model of entry in a multi-period quantity-setting framework with costly capacity investments, for which they determine the number of active firms in the market in function of a uniform fixed cost. More recently, a two-stage Stackelberg-type game (similar to the oligopoly markets employed in this paper) with one exogenously given leader allowed to enter in the first period and other followers allowed to enter in the second period has been considered by

Etro (2008).⁶ For each firm, entry involves paying fixed entry costs and determining the magnitude of its decision variable.⁷ Since Etro assumes identical firms, his model does not yield Forchheimer's model of dominant firm price leadership.

Now we briefly describe Forchheimer's model of dominant-firm price leadership (for more details we refer to Scherer and Ross, 1990). The dominant firm sets its price by maximizing profit with respect to its residual demand curve, which can be obtained as the horizontal difference of the demand curve and the aggregate supply curve of the competitive fringe. Hence, the residual demand curve is given by $D_d(p) := (D(p) - S_c(p))^+$ and the dominant firm has to maximize the residual profit function:

$$\pi_d(p) := D_d(p)p - c_0(D_d(p)), \quad (1)$$

where we used cost function c_0 because in our model firm 0 shall play the role of the dominant firm. We can obtain the prices maximizing π_d by solving

$$\pi'_d(p) = D_d(p) + D'_d(p)(p - mc_0(D_d(p))) = 0, \quad (2)$$

by Assumptions 1 and 2. It can be verified that each stationary point of (1) has to be a strict local maximum, and therefore, the first-order condition (2) gives us the unique solution to the profit maximization problem of a Forchheimer type dominant firm. We call the price maximizing π_d , denoted by p^* , the *dominant-firm price*. According to Forchheimer's dominant-firm model of price leadership, the dominant firm chooses price p^* , the small firms set also price p^* and the competitive fringe supplies $S_c(p^*)$.

3 The quantity-setting games

In this section we consider a sequence of quantity-setting games $O_q = (O_q^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ corresponding to a sequence of oligopoly markets $O = (O^n)_{n=1}^\infty$. The firms choose the quantities of production and the market clearing price is determined through an unspecified market-clearing mechanism in each quantity-setting game. Usually, the presence of an auctioneer⁸ is assumed in such types of models (for more details see for instance Tirole, 1988).

The quantity actions of the firms in the n th oligopoly market are given by a vector $\mathbf{q} = (q_0, q_1, \dots, q_n) \in [0, a]^{n+1}$ that we call from now on a *quantity profile*. The n th quantity-setting game is described by the structure

$$O_q^n := \left\langle \{0, 1, \dots, n\}, [0, a]^{n+1}, (\pi_i^n)_{i=0}^n \right\rangle,$$

⁶ For more on entry and product differentiation in the two-stage quantity-setting framework see Žigić (2008).

⁷ Etro (2008) also investigates the case of price competition.

⁸ For a model that does not assume an auctioneer and explains the price formation mechanism see Kreps and Scheinkman (1983). One has to mention that Kreps and Scheinkman's result crucially depends on their imposed assumptions on rationing and cost (see for instance Davidson and Deneckere, 1986; and Deneckere and Kovenock, 1992).

where

$$\pi_i^n(\mathbf{q}) := P(q_0 + q_1 + \dots + q_n)q_i - c_i^n(q_i)$$

for any $i \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$.

In this section we make the following assumption on the timing of decisions:

Assumption 5 Let firm 0 be the exogenously specified first mover. The remaining firms move simultaneously following firm 0.

We will establish a link between our sequence of quantity-setting games and Forchheimer's model of dominant-firm price leadership. In particular the sequence of equilibrium prices of the quantity-setting games converges to the dominant-firm price p^* and the aggregate output of the small firms converges to the output of the competitive fringe in Forchheimer's model. This is stated more formally in the following proposition.

Proposition 1 Let $O_q = (O_q^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ be a sequence of quantity-setting oligopoly market games satisfying Assumptions 1-5. Then for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$ the game O_q^n has a subgame perfect Nash equilibrium and for any sequence of subgame perfect Nash equilibrium profiles $(\mathbf{q}^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ we have

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P\left(\sum_{i=0}^n q_i^n\right) = p^*, \quad \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} q_0^n = D_d(p^*) \quad \text{and} \quad \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n q_i^n = S_c(p^*).$$

Proof We start with demonstrating that every two-stage game O_q^n has a subgame perfect Nash equilibrium. Suppose that firm 0 produces an amount of $q_0 \in [0, a]$ in stage one. Then by our assumptions it follows from Szidarovszky and Yakowitz (1977) that for any n the subgame has a unique Nash equilibrium. For the game O_q^n we shall denote by $f_{ni}(q_0)$ ($i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$) the unique equilibrium solution of stage two in response to the large firm's first-stage action q_0 . Furthermore, let $f_{nc}(q_0) := \sum_{i=1}^n f_{ni}(q_0)$. The equilibrium of the subgame has to satisfy the first-order conditions

$$P(q_0 + f_{nc}(q_0)) + P'(q_0 + f_{nc}(q_0))f_{ni}(q_0) - mc_i^n(f_{ni}(q_0)) = 0, \quad (3)$$

($i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$). The Implicit Function Theorem implies that the functions f_{ni} and f_{nc} are continuous and differentiable. Thus, the large firm's first-stage profit function

$$\widehat{\pi}_0(q_0) := \pi_0(q_0, f_{n1}(q_0), \dots, f_{nn}(q_0)) = P(q_0 + f_{nc}(q_0))q_0 - c_0(q_0) \quad (4)$$

is continuous, and therefore, it follows that the game O_q^n has a subgame perfect Nash equilibrium.

We take a sequence of subgame perfect Nash equilibrium quantity profiles \mathbf{q}^n . Let the small firms aggregate production be $q_c^n := \sum_{i=1}^n q_i^n$. The sequence $(q_0^n, q_c^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ has at least one cluster point since it is bounded. We pick an arbitrary convergent subsequence from the sequence $(q_0^n, q_c^n)_{n=1}^\infty$. For notational convenience we suppose that $(q_0^n, q_c^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ is already convergent. We shall denote by (\bar{q}_0, \bar{q}_c) its limit point. Note that $q_i^n = f_{ni}(q_0^n)$ and $q_c^n = f_{nc}(q_0^n)$.

The small firms' equilibrium actions $(q_i^n)_{i=1}^n$ in stage two have to satisfy the following first-order conditions

$$\frac{\partial \pi_i}{\partial q_i}(\mathbf{q}^n) = P(q_0^n + q_c^n) + P'(q_0^n + q_c^n) q_i^n - mc_i^n(q_i^n) = 0. \quad (5)$$

We claim that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} q_i^n = 0$, where in case of a double sequence a_i^n with $i, n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $i \leq n$ we write $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_i^n = a$ if

$$\forall \varepsilon > 0 : \exists n_0 \in \mathbb{N} : \forall n \geq n_0 : \forall i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\} : |a_i^n - a| < \varepsilon.$$

From (5) and Assumption 4 we obtain that

$$\begin{aligned} q_i^n &= s_i^n (P(q_0^n + q_c^n) + P'(q_0^n + q_c^n) q_i^n) \\ &< \frac{\alpha}{n} S_c (P(q_0^n + q_c^n) + P'(q_0^n + q_c^n) q_i^n) \leq \frac{\alpha}{n} S_c(b) \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

for any $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$. Thus, we have $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} q_i^n = 0$.

Let $p^n := P(q_0^n + q_c^n)$, $r^n := P'(q_0^n + q_c^n)$, and $u^n := P''(q_0^n + q_c^n)$. Note that $p^n \geq 0$, $r^n < 0$ and $u^n \leq 0$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$. We shall denote by \bar{p} , \bar{r} , and \bar{u} the corresponding limit points of sequences $(p^n)_{n=1}^\infty$, $(r^n)_{n=1}^\infty$, and $(u^n)_{n=1}^\infty$. By taking limits in (5) we obtain

$$\bar{p} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} mc_i^n(q_i^n). \quad (7)$$

The following three auxiliary statements can be derived⁹:

$$\bar{p} = MC_c(\bar{q}_c), \quad (8)$$

$$f'_{nc} = -1 + \frac{1}{1 + \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{P' + P'' f_{ni}}{P' - (mc_i^n)'}}. \quad (9)$$

and

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{r^n + u^n q_i^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} = -\frac{\bar{r}}{MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)}. \quad (10)$$

Now, substituting (10) into (9) yields

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} f'_{nc}(q_0^n) = -\frac{\bar{r}}{\bar{r} - MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)}, \quad (11)$$

which we need for determining the large firm's behavior.

The sequence of the large firm's decisions $(q_0^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ has to satisfy the following first-order condition derived from (4):

$$\widehat{\pi}'_0(q_0^n) = P(q_0^n + q_c^n) + P'(q_0^n + q_c^n) (1 + f'_{nc}(q_0^n)) q_0^n - mc_0(q_0^n) = 0. \quad (12)$$

⁹ The calculations of (8), (9) and (10) are quite tedious and therefore, relegated to the Appendix.

If we take limits in equation (12), then in consideration of (11)

$$\bar{p} = mc_0(\bar{q}_0) - \bar{r} \left(1 - \frac{\bar{r}}{\bar{r} - MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)} \right) \bar{q}_0 \quad (13)$$

must hold. From (8) and (13) we can easily obtain that \bar{p} is a solution to (2):

$$\pi'_d(\bar{p}) = \bar{q}_0 + \left(\frac{1}{\bar{r}} - \frac{1}{MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)} \right) \left(\frac{\bar{r} MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)}{\bar{r} - MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)} \right) \bar{q}_0 = 0.$$

Thus, \bar{p} is indeed a solution of equation (2). Since equation (2) has a unique solution we also conclude that the sequence $(p^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ has only one cluster point. Therefore, $p^* = \bar{p}$. Furthermore, it follows that all convergent subsequences of the bounded sequence $(q_0^n, q_c^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ have the same limit point, which means that $(q_0^n, q_c^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ is convergent. Hence, (8) implies $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n q_i^n = S_c(p^*)$, and therefore, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} q_0^n = D_d(p^*)$ by $p^* = P(\bar{q}_0 + \bar{q}_c)$. \square

We illustrate Proposition 1 by considering the case of linear demand, quadratic cost functions and the small firms having identical cost functions, because in this case (2), (5) and (12) can be solved explicitly.

Example 1 $D(p) = 1 - p$, $c_0(q) = \frac{a}{2}q^2$ and $c_i(q) = n\frac{b}{2}q^2$ for all $i = 1, \dots, n$.

Maximizing profits with respect to $D_d^{-1}(q) = \frac{b(1-q)}{1+b}$ gives us the output

$$q_0^F = \frac{b}{a(b+1) + 2b}$$

of the Forchheimer-type dominant firm. Turning to the two-stage quantity-setting game with the large firm as the exogenously given first mover, if the large firm produces q_0 in stage 1, then the small firms will produce

$$q_i = \frac{1 - q_0}{1 + n(b+1)} \quad \text{for all } i = 1, \dots, n$$

in stage 2. Taking the reactions of the small firms into consideration, the large firm produces

$$q_0 = \frac{\frac{1+n(b+1)}{1+n(b+1)}}{a + 2\frac{1+n(b+1)}{1+n(b+1)}} \rightarrow \frac{\frac{b}{b+1}}{a + \frac{2b}{b+1}} = \frac{b}{a(b+1) + 2b} = q_0^F$$

as n tends to infinity. It is straightforward to check that the aggregate output of the small firms in stage 2 converges to the output of the competitive fringe in Forchheimer's model.

For an economic interpretation of Proposition 1 and Example 1, consider a market with one large firm and sufficiently many small firms. In case of modeling this market, for instance, in an empirical research, we could say by Proposition 1 that employing the dominant firm model of price leadership – even in a quantity-setting environment – would lead only to minor errors, while substantially simplifying the analysis. To be more precise we would need

a result on the speed of convergence to the dominant firm model. By imposing, for example, an error margin on the equilibrium price, we could easily determine the minimum number of required small firms in Example 1 to justify the application of the dominant firm model.

Finally, we would like to remark that our convergence result stated in Proposition 1 is in the spirit of Novshek's (1985) Cournot convergence result in the sense that the increase in the number of small firms is linked with a rescaling of the small firms cost functions.

4 Endogenous timing

Proposition 1 ensures that a two-stage quantity-setting game with a large firm as the exogenously given first mover and many almost negligible small firms as exogenously given followers almost results in Forchheimer's dominant firm model of price leadership. A crucial question to be addressed is why the large firm should accept the role of the leader and the small firms the role of the follower. By remaining in a deterministic framework and considering only quantity as a possible strategic variable, we give a negative answer to this question by applying Matsumura's (1999) general result on timing in quantity-setting games, which allows us to investigate a quite complex timing game.

We have to emphasize that the outcome of the quantity-setting timing game is independent of the supply structure of the firms and thus, we will not have to consider a sequence of quantity-setting games as in Section 3. Let us briefly sketch Matsumura's (1999) timing game and result. Suppose that there are $n + 1$ firms and $m + 1$ stages. In the first stage (period 0) each firm selects its production period $t \in \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$. A firm i producing q_i in period $t_i \in \{2, \dots, m\}$ observes any production decision q_j made in period $t_j \in \{1, \dots, t_i - 1\}$ and firm i does not know the set of firms producing in the same period t_i , which means that this timing game can be regarded as an extension of the 'extended game with action commitment' investigated by Hamilton and Slutsky (1990).¹⁰ At the end of period m the market opens and each firm sells its entire production at the market clearing price. That is, firm i achieves $\pi_i(q_0, q_1, \dots, q_n) = P(\sum_{j=0}^n q_j)q_i - c_i(q_i)$ profits.

In order to determine the outcome of the introduced timing game Matsumura (1999) imposes three assumptions on two-stage games with exogenous timing. The set of leaders, denoted by S^L , consisting of those firms producing in period 1, and the set of followers, denoted by S^F , consisting of those firms producing in period 2, are exogenously given. Firms moving in the same period move simultaneously and the followers observe the production quantities of the leaders. The production q_i of a firm $i \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\} \setminus (S^L \cup S^F)$ is exogenously given and common knowledge. Matsumura assumes that all two-stage games with exogenous sequencing have a unique equilibrium in pure strategies

¹⁰ At the end of this section we will also consider the 'extended game with observable action delay' in which the firms know the set of firms moving in the same time period.

(Matsumura, 1999, Assumption 1), every firm strictly prefers moving simultaneously with the other firms to being the only follower (Matsumura, 1999, Assumption 2), and every firm strictly prefers moving before the other firms to moving simultaneously with them (Matsumura, 1999, Assumption 3). Under these three assumptions Matsumura (1999, Proposition 3) shows that in any equilibrium of the $m + 1$ period timing game at most one firm does not move in the first period.

We will establish that our assumptions imposed on the cost functions and the demand curve in Section 2 imply Matsumura's second and third assumptions.¹¹ Thus, we have to assume explicitly only the following assumption.

Assumption 6 Any two-stage game with exogenous sequencing possesses a unique equilibrium in pure strategies.

Assumption 6 is needed because there is no simple condition in our framework, which guarantees the existence and uniqueness of the equilibrium for two-stage games. Sherali (1984) provides sufficient conditions for the existence and uniqueness of the subgame perfect equilibrium. However, Sherali's (1984) conditions for uniqueness cannot be applied in our model since we have to allow asymmetric cost functions, while Sherali (1984, Theorem 5) requires that the firms' moving in the first period have identical cost functions.¹² Moreover, Ehrenmann (2004) points to the difficulty of the problem even in case of identical leaders by presenting an example of a triopoly market with two leaders having identical linear cost functions, a follower having also a linear cost function and a linear demand function that possesses also non-symmetric equilibria concerning just the first-stage output of the leaders. These results indicate also that checking Matsumura's (1999) Assumptions 2 and 3 for the oligopolistic case is a far more difficult task than for the simple duopolistic case for which the results are well-known. While the case of just one leader has been investigated in the literature, for example, by Sherali, Soyster and Murphy (1983), the case of just one follower has not got, as far as we know, real attention in the literature – with the exception of the above-mentioned counterexample by Ehrenmann (2004).

The next proposition determines the endogenous order of moves in quantity-setting games.

Proposition 2 *Let O_q be a quantity-setting oligopoly game satisfying Assumptions 1, 2, and 6. Then in an equilibrium of the $m + 1$ period Matsumura timing game at most one firm does not set its output in the first period.*

¹¹ Matsumura (1996) gives a sufficient condition which ensures that these two Assumptions are satisfied. However, we cannot apply this latter result in our framework without imposing further assumptions.

¹² For more on the existence and the uniqueness of the subgame perfect Nash equilibrium of two-stage quantity-setting games we refer to Tobin (1992), Flåm, Mallozzi and Morgan (2002), and Mallozzi and Morgan (2005). DeMiguel and Xu (2009) shows existence in case of stochastic demand. For the easier case of linear demand and identical firms with linear cost functions Daughety (1990) investigates welfare effects, mergers and concentration in the market.

Proof In order to demonstrate the proposition we have only to verify that our Assumptions 1, 2 and 6 imply Matsumura's (1999) Assumptions 2 and 3. Hence, we have to consider three different two-stage games with exogenous timing. In particular, the Cournot game in which each firm moves in the same time period, the game with only one leader and the game with only one follower.

Since the Assumptions 1 and 2 ensure the existence of a unique Nash equilibrium in pure strategies¹³ (see for instance Szidarovszky and Yakowitz, 1977) the first-order conditions below determine the outcome of the Cournot game.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial q_i} \pi_i(q_0, q_1, \dots, q_n) = P \left(\sum_{j=0}^n q_j \right) + P' \left(\sum_{j=0}^n q_j \right) q_i - mc_i(q_i) = 0 \quad (14)$$

Regarding that our assumptions imply that (14) has an interior solution, by rearranging (14) we can obtain the next useful equation:

$$P' \left(\sum_{j=0}^n q_j \right) = \frac{mc_i(q_i) - P \left(\sum_{j=0}^n q_j \right)}{q_i} < 0. \quad (15)$$

We shall denote the Cournot solution by $(q_i^c)_{i=0}^n$.

Next we investigate the game with only one leader. Suppose that firm i is the leader. Clearly, the leader achieves the same profit as in the Cournot game by setting its production to q_i^c .¹⁴ Hence, it remains to show that the leader earns more as a leader than by moving simultaneously with the other firms. Given the production q_i of firm i the followers play in the subgame a simultaneous-move quantity-setting game subject to the inverse demand curve $\tilde{P}(q) = P(q + q_i)$. Thus, the subgame has a unique Nash equilibrium because of Assumptions 1 and 2. Let us denote by $Q_{-i}(q_i)$ the aggregate production of the followers in response of the leader's output q_i . Then firm i maximizes the function $\tilde{\pi}_i(q_i) := P(q_i + Q_{-i}(q_i)) q_i - c_i(q_i)$. It can be easily checked¹⁵ that $Q'_{-i}(q_i) \in (-1, 0)$ holds for all $q_i \in (0, a)$. Therefore, in consideration of (14) and $q_i^c + Q_{-i}(q_i^c) = \sum_{j=0}^n q_j^c$ it follows that

$$\tilde{\pi}'_i(q_i^c) = P(q_i^c + Q_{-i}(q_i^c)) + (1 + Q'_{-i}(q_i^c)) P'(q_i^c + Q_{-i}(q_i^c)) q_i^c - mc_i(q_i^c) > 0,$$

which in turn implies that firm i makes more profits by producing more than q_i^c . This means that Matsumura's (1999) Assumption 3 is fulfilled.

Finally, we have to investigate the two-stage game with only one follower. Suppose that firm i is the follower. Again we denote by Q_{-i} the aggregate production of the other firms but now q_i depends on Q_{-i} . For a given amount

¹³ Note that this is also guaranteed by Assumption 6, but we wanted to emphasize that Assumption 6 is not needed at this stage of the proof.

¹⁴ This has been already shown by Sherali, Soyster and Murphy (1983, Lemma 6).

¹⁵ Note that by deriving (9) we have carried out the necessary calculations since (9) does not depend on the special role played by firm 0 in Proposition 1.

Q_{-i} firm i has to maximize the function $\widehat{\pi}_i(q_i) := P(q_i + Q_{-i})q_i - c_i(q_i)$, which has a unique solution determined by

$$\widehat{\pi}'_i(q_i) = P(q_i + Q_{-i}) + P'(q_i + Q_{-i})q_i - mc_i(q_i) = 0. \quad (16)$$

From this first-order condition we obtain that

$$\frac{dq_i}{dQ_{-i}} = -\frac{P'(q_i + Q_{-i}) + P''(q_i + Q_{-i})q_i}{2P'(q_i + Q_{-i}) + P''(q_i + Q_{-i})q_i - mc'_i(q_i)}, \quad (17)$$

which implies that $dq_i/dQ_{-i} \in (-1, 0)$ and $d(q_i + Q_{-i})/dQ_{-i} \in (0, 1)$ for any $Q_{-i} \in [0, a)$. This means that an increase in the first-stage aggregate output decreases the followers output and increases the total output. Let us remark that $dq_i/dq_j = dq_i/dQ_{-i}$ holds true for any firm $j \neq i$. The first-stage quantities of firms $\{0, 1, \dots, n\} \setminus \{i\}$ are determined (because of Assumption 6) by the first-order conditions

$$P(q_i(Q_{-i}) + Q_{-i}) + \left(1 + \frac{dq_i}{dq_j}\right) P'(q_i(Q_{-i}) + Q_{-i})q_j - mc_j(q_j) = 0. \quad (18)$$

Clearly, for an equilibrium profile we must have $q_i + Q_{-i} \in [0, a)$ and $q_j > 0$ for all $j \neq i$. Hence, by rearranging (18) we obtain

$$\left(1 + \frac{dq_i}{dQ_{-i}}\right) P'(q_i(Q_{-i}) + Q_{-i}) = \frac{mc_j(q_j) - P(q_i(Q_{-i}) + Q_{-i})}{q_j} < 0 \quad (19)$$

for all $j \neq i$. We shall denote the solution to equations (16) and (18) by $(q_i^*)_{i=0}^n$.

We claim that $q_i^c + Q_{-i}^c < q_i^* + Q_{-i}^*$. Suppose that this is not the case; i.e., $q_i^c + Q_{-i}^c \geq q_i^* + Q_{-i}^*$ holds true. Then we must have $Q_{-i}^c \geq Q_{-i}^*$ and therefore, we can find a firm $j \neq i$ for which we have $q_j^c \geq q_j^*$. For this firm j we can derive the following inequalities:

$$\begin{aligned} \left(1 + \frac{dq_i}{dQ_{-i}}\right) P'(q_i^* + Q_{-i}^*) &> P'(q_i^* + Q_{-i}^*) \geq P'(q_i^c + Q_{-i}^c) \\ &= \frac{mc_j(q_j^c) - P(q_j^c + Q_{-j}^c)}{q_j^c} \\ &\geq \frac{mc_j(q_j^c) - P(q_j^* + Q_{-j}^*)}{q_j^c} \\ &\geq \frac{mc_j(q_j^*) - P(q_j^* + Q_{-j}^*)}{q_j^*}, \end{aligned}$$

by applying $dq_i/dQ_{-i} = dq_i/dq_j \in (-1, 0)$, Assumption 1, (15), Assumption 1 and by observing that the function $f(q) := (mc_j(q) - P(q_j^* + Q_{-j}^*))/q$ is strictly increasing on $[q_j^*, q_j^c]$. But this contradicts (19).

Since $q_i^c + Q_{-i}^c < q_i^* + Q_{-i}^*$ and (17) imply $q_i^c > q_i^*$ and $P(q_i^c + Q_{-i}^c) > P(q_i^* + Q_{-i}^*)$ we can deduce that firm i realizes more profits in the Cournot game than in the game in which it plays the role of the only one follower. Thus, Matsumura's (1999) Assumption 2 is also satisfied. \square

Proposition 2 implies for quantity-setting games satisfying the assumptions in Proposition 2 that none of the firms will become the unique leader in the market if there are at least three firms and therefore, Forchheimer's model will not emerge.

We state our result following from Proposition 2 on the sequence of oligopoly markets investigated in Section 3 explicitly.

Corollary 1 *Let $(O_q^n)_{n=1}^\infty$ be a sequence of quantity-setting oligopoly market games satisfying Assumptions 1-4 and Assumption 6. Then for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$ the large firm does not emerge as the unique endogenous first mover of game O_q^n .*

If we consider the extended timing game with observable action delay,¹⁶ then we will not have an equilibrium with one follower, while every firm moving in the first period will be an equilibrium. This follows immediately from Matsumura's (1999) Assumption 2.

5 Concluding remarks

The intuition behind Proposition 1 is quite straightforward: If we consider the Cournot game which occurs after firm 0 has chosen its quantity q_0 , then the outcome of the subgame played by the remaining firms will converge to the competitive one in the residual market as n becomes large under appropriate assumptions. Thus, in the limit the price in the market must equal the marginal costs of the small firms and therefore, if we were allowed to exchange the order of the limits, then Proposition 1 would follow. In particular, the order of maximizing the profits of the large firm and taking infinitely many small firms has to be exchanged.

Of course, it is not at all clear that we can exchange the order of the limits in the intuitive proof described above. Nevertheless, if we would like to apply existing convergence results for Cournot games (see, for instance, Ruffin, 1971 and Novshek, 1985), then these convergence results would need to be extended substantially. In particular, to exchange the order of the limits we would need to prove that the convergence is uniform in the large firm's action q_0 . Hence, working out the described intuitive proof does not necessarily result in a shorter proof of Proposition 1.

Finally, we would like to mention that Example 1 could be suitable to illustrate (in textbooks on Industrial Organization) how Forchheimer's model can be implemented.

¹⁶ In case of observable action delay, a firm does not only know about the quantities of those firms moving earlier, but also the group of those firms with which it will move in the subsequent period.

Appendix

Proof of (8). In order to verify (8) note that by (7) we have

$$\forall \varepsilon > 0 : \exists n_0 \in \mathbb{N} : \forall n \geq n_0 : \forall i \in \{1, \dots, n\} : |mc_i^n(q_i^n) - \bar{p}| < \varepsilon. \quad (20)$$

Select values \hat{q}_i^n and \tilde{q}_i^n such that $mc_i^n(\hat{q}_i^n) = \bar{p} - \varepsilon$ and $mc_i^n(\tilde{q}_i^n) = \bar{p} + \varepsilon$. From $\hat{q}_i^n \leq q_i^n \leq \tilde{q}_i^n$ it follows that $\hat{q}_c^n \leq q_c^n \leq \tilde{q}_c^n$, which in turn implies $MC_c(\hat{q}_c^n) \leq MC_c(q_c^n) \leq MC_c(\tilde{q}_c^n)$. Since $MC_c(\hat{q}_c^n) = \bar{p} - \varepsilon$ and $MC_c(\tilde{q}_c^n) = \bar{p} + \varepsilon$ we obtain, by the continuity of MC_c , equation (8). \square

Proof of (9). Differentiating (3) with respect to q_0 we obtain

$$(1 + f'_{nc})P' + f'_{ni}P' + (1 + f'_{nc})P''f_{ni} - f'_{ni}(mc_i^n)' = 0, \quad (21)$$

where we have omitted the arguments of the functions in order to shorten the expression. Rearranging (21) yields

$$f'_{ni} = -\frac{P' + P''f_{ni}}{P' - (mc_i^n)'}(1 + f'_{nc}). \quad (22)$$

Summing (21) for all $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ we get

$$nP' + P''f_{nc} + ((n+1)P' + P''f_{nc})f'_{nc} - \sum_{i=1}^n f'_{ni}(mc_i^n)' = 0. \quad (23)$$

Substituting (22) for f'_{ni} in (23) we can express f'_{nc} and after the necessary rearrangements we obtain (9). \square

Proof of (10). First, we prove

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{(mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} = \frac{1}{MC_c'(\bar{q}_c)}. \quad (24)$$

Let $p_i^n := mc_i^n(q_i^n)$, $\hat{p}^n := \min_{i=1, \dots, n} p_i^n$ and $\tilde{p}^n := \max_{i=1, \dots, n} p_i^n$. Then, by (20) and the continuity of S'_c we can find to all $\varepsilon > 0$ an $n_0 \in \mathbb{N}$ such that for all $n \geq n_0$ we have

$$S'_c(\bar{p}) - \varepsilon \leq S'_c(\hat{p}^n) \leq \sum_{i=1}^n (s_i^n)'(p_i^n) \leq S'_c(\tilde{p}^n) \leq S'_c(\bar{p}) + \varepsilon. \quad (25)$$

Thus,

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{(mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n (s_i^n)'(p_i^n) = S'_c(\bar{p}) = \frac{1}{MC_c'(\bar{q}_c)},$$

where the second equality follows from (25) while the last from (8).

Finally, we check (10). Consider

$$\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{r^n + u^n q_i^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{r^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} + \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{u^n q_i^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)}, \quad (26)$$

where the second summand tends to 0 since for all $K > 0$ we can find an $m_1 \in \mathbb{N}$ such that for all $n \geq m_1$ we have $(mc_i^n)'(q_i^n) - r^n > K$ for all $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ because $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n) = \infty$; and therefore,

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{u^n q_i^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} \leq \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{u^n q_i^n}{-K} = \frac{\bar{u} \bar{q}_c}{-K}$$

for all $K > 0$. We show that the first summand in (26) tends to $-\bar{r}/MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)$ by two inequalities. First,

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{r^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} \leq - \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{r^n}{(mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} = - \frac{\bar{r}}{MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)}$$

by (24). Second, to any $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists a positive integer m_2 such that for all $n \geq m_2$ we have

$$0 \leq (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n) - r^n < (1 + \varepsilon) (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)$$

for all $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$, which in turn implies that

$$\frac{r^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} > - \frac{r^n}{(1 + \varepsilon) (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)}.$$

Thus, by (24)

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{r^n}{r^n - (mc_i^n)'(q_i^n)} \geq - \frac{\bar{r}}{MC'_c(\bar{q}_c)},$$

and we have established (10). \square

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