Complex Dynamics of Bertrand Duopoly Games with Bounded Rationality

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Abstract—A dynamic of Bertrand duopoly game is analyzed, where players use different production methods and choose their prices with bounded rationality. The equilibriums of the corresponding discrete dynamical systems are investigated. The stability conditions of Nash equilibrium under a local adjustment process are studied. The stability of Nash equilibrium, as some parameters of the model are varied, gives rise to complex dynamics such as cycles of higher order and chaos. On this basis, we discover that an increase of adjustment speed of bounded rational player can make Bertrand market sink into the chaotic state. Finally, the complex dynamics, bifurcations and chaos are displayed by numerical simulation.

Keywords—Bertrand duopoly model, Discrete dynamical system, Heterogeneous expectations, Nash equilibrium.

I. INTRODUCTION

BERTRAND, a French mathematician, was first to introduce the Bertrand model which was widely use mathematical representations of duopoly market [1]. Bertrand model is a model of price competition between duopoly firms which results in each charging the price that would be charged under perfect competition, known as marginal cost pricing. The Bertrand model, in which each duopoly firm sets its optimal product’s price by competitors’ price, is a fully rational game based on the following assumptions:

There are at least two competitive firms producing homogeneous products; each firm has a complete knowledge of the market demand function; all firms compete in price, and choose their respective prices simultaneously; consumers buy everything from the cheaper firm or half at each, if the price is equal.

Under these conditions of full information all firms will try to reduce their products price, until the product is selling at no profit. It is a Nash equilibrium. This surprising result is referred to as the Bertrand paradox. The Bertrand paradox rarely appears in practice because real products are almost always differentiated in some way other than price. One way of avoiding the paradox is to allow the firms to sell differentiated products [2]. Bertrand model assumed the each player’s behavior is fully rational. But it is impossible that all players are naive. There, different players’ expectations are proposed: naïve player, bounded rational player and adaptive [3]-[5]. So each player adopts his expectations to adjust his product’s price in order to maximize his profit.

In the past few years, several works of Bertrand model have been done. Robert [6] considered a model of Bertrand competition with fixed costs of entry or production. Walter and Elmar [7] analyzed a simple, repeated game of simultaneous entry and pricing. They report a surprising property of the symmetric equilibrium solution: If the number of potential competitors is increased above two, the market breaks down with higher probability, and the competitive outcome becomes less likely. More potential competition lowers welfare – another Bertrand paradox. Dufwenberg and Gneezy [8] studied the effects of the number of firms in a standard Bertrand competition framework with constant marginal cost and inelastic demand. In their experiments, price is above marginal cost for the case of two firms but equal to that cost for three and four firms. Carlos, Ana and Klaus [9] presented an evolutionary model of Bertrand competition in a market for a homogeneous good, where identical firms face a technology with decreasing returns to scale. They found that the dynamic process selects a strict subset of the Nash equilibrium of the underlying game, even under simple behavior. Lo and Kiang [10] applied “minimal” quantization rules to investigate the quantum version of the Bertrand duopoly with differentiated products. They found that while negative entanglement diminishes the profit of each firm below the classical limit, positive entanglement enhances the profit monotonically, reaching a maximum in the limit of maximal entanglement. Tao [11] considered a new type of share function in Bertrand model. Under his assumption, the firms can earn a positive profit in price competition no matter how many firms are present in the market. Yue, Samar and Zhu [12] considered a market where customers need to buy two complementary goods as mixed bundle, offered by two separate firms. They presented a profit maximization model to obtain optimal strategies for a firm making decisions under information asymmetry. Jason [13] studied a two-stage game with capacity precommitment followed by price competition where firms have incomplete information about their rival's marginal cost. The game has a Cournot outcome if and only if the lowest possible marginal cost is sufficiently high relative to the expected marginal cost. Andersson [14] analyzed the role of patience in a repeated Bertrand duopoly where firms bargain over which collusive price and market share to implement. He found that the least patient firm's market share is not monotone in its own discount factor. Fernanda and Flávio [15] considered an international
trade under Bertrand model with differentiated products and with unknown production costs.

In this paper, we set up a Bertrand duopoly model with heterogeneous players and apply dynamic methods to investigate the dynamic behaviors of this duopoly game. The paper is organized as follows. In Section II, we determine a duopoly Bertrand model with heterogeneous expectations by a two-dimensional map. In Section III, we study the model of duopoly game. Explicit parametric conditions of the existence, local stability and bifurcation of equilibrium points will be given. In Section IV, we show the complex dynamic phenomenon of bifurcation, chaos and chaotic attractor by numerical simulations.

II. MODEL

We consider that there are two firms which choose different prices for their products, respectively in an oligopoly market. Let $p_i(t), i = 1,2$ represent the price of $i$th firm during period $t = 0,1,2,\ldots$. The quantity each firm sells $Q_i$, a linear inverse demand function, is determined from the prices of their products in period $t$ [16].

$$Q_i = a - b p_i + d p_i,$$

$$Q_2 = a - b p_2 + d p_1,$$

where $a > 0, b > 0, d > 0$. The parameter $d$ reflects the extent to which the two products are substitutes for each other. We assume that the firms have constant marginal costs equal to $c_i$, and no fixed costs. Accordingly, the cost function is taken in the following form

$$C_i = c_i Q_i, \quad i = 1,2.$$  \hspace{1cm} (2)

with above assumptions the profit of the $i$th firm in the single period is given by

$$\Pi_i(p_i, p_j) = (p_i - c_i) Q_i, \quad i, j = 1,2.$$  \hspace{1cm} (3)

Hence $i$th firm’s price for period $t+1$ is decided by solving the optimization problem

$$p_i(t+1) = \arg \max \Pi_i(p_i(t), p_j(t+1)), \quad i = 1,2,$$

$$p_j(t+1) = \arg \max \Pi_j(p_i(t+1), p_j(t)),\quad i \neq j,$$

where $p_i(t+1)$ represent the expectation of $i$th firm about $j$th firm’s price of product during period $t+1$. The marginal profit of the $i$th firm in period $t$ is

$$\frac{\partial \Pi_i(p_i, p_j)}{\partial p_i} = (a + b c_i + d p_j), \quad i, j = 1,2, i \neq j.$$  \hspace{1cm} (5)

This optimization problem has unique solution:

$$p_i = \frac{1}{a + b c_i + d p_j}, \quad i = 1,2.$$  \hspace{1cm} (6)

Information in the market usually is incomplete, so players can use more complicated expectations such as bounded rationality and naive [3]. For the naive player, he determines price of production with his expectation of rival’s price which is the same as that previous period. Then the naïve player decides his output according to (6).

$$p_i(t+1) = \frac{1}{a + b c_i + d p_j(t)}, \quad i = 1,2.$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)

The bounded rational player has no complete knowledge of market, hence he determines price of production with the information of local profit maximizers. He decides to increase (decrease) its price if it has a positive (negative) marginal profit. In [17], this adjustment mechanism has been called myopic by Dixit. Thus, the dynamic adjustment mechanism can be modelled as

$$p_i(t+1) = p_i(t) + \alpha (a + b c_i - 2 b p_i + d p_j),$$

where $\alpha$ is a positive parameter which represents the speed of adjustment of $i$th firm.

We assume firm 1 is a bounded rational player and firm 2 is a naïve player. With above assumptions, the duopoly game with heterogeneous players if described by a two dimensional nonlinear map $T(p_1, p_2) \rightarrow (p_1', p_2')$ defined as

$$T : \begin{cases} p_1' = p_1 + \alpha p_1 (a + b c_i - 2 b p_i + d p_j), \\ p_2' = \frac{1}{a + b c_i + d p_j}. \end{cases}$$  \hspace{1cm} (9)

where “$\rightarrow$” denotes the unit-time advancement, that is, if the right-hand side variables are productions of period $t$, then the left-hand ones represent productions of period $(t+1)$.

III. EQUILIBRIUM POINTS AND LOCAL STABILITY

Because Bertrand model is a economic model, we only study the dynamic behavior of the nonnegative equilibrium points. The fixed points of the map (9) are obtained as nonnegative solution of the non-linear algebraic system

$$\begin{cases} p_1(a + b c_i - 2 b p_i + d p_j) = 0, \\ \frac{1}{a + b c_i + d p_j} = 0, \end{cases}$$  \hspace{1cm} (10)

which is obtained by setting $p_i = p_i, i = 1,2$ in system (10). We have two fixed points of system (10) $E_0 = (0, (a + b c_i) / 2b)$ and $E_1 = (p_1', p_2')$ where

$$p_1' = \frac{a + b d c_i + 2 b^2 c_i}{4 b^2 - d^2}, \quad p_2' = \frac{a + b d c_i + 2 b^2 c_i}{4 b^2 - d^2}.$$
Obviously, $E_0$ is a boundary equilibrium. The fixed point $E_1$ is a Nash equilibrium and has economic meaning when $2b > d$.

For studying the local stability of equilibrium, the eigenvalues of the Jacobian matrix of the system (1) on the complex plane must be considered. The Jacobian matrix of system (1) at the point $(p_1, p_2)$ has the form

$$J(p_1, p_2) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 + \alpha (a + b c_1 + d p_2 - 4 b p_1) & \alpha d p_1 \\ \frac{\alpha}{d} & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

(11)

**Theorem 1**
The boundary equilibrium $E_0$ of system (9) is an unstable equilibrium point.

**Proof.** In order to prove these results, we consider the eigenvalues of Jacobian matrix $J$ at $E_0$ which take the form

$$J(E_0) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 + \alpha (a + d(a + b c_1)) & \alpha d p_1 \\ \frac{d}{2b} & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

(12)

whose eigenvalues are

$$\lambda_1 = 1 + \alpha (a + d(a + b c_1)), \quad \lambda_2 = 0.$$  

From the condition that $a, b, c_i (i = 1, 2)$ are positive parameters, we have that $|\lambda_1| > 1$. Then $E_0$ is unstable equilibrium point of system (9).

Now we investigate the local stability of Nash equilibrium $E_1$. At $E_1$, the Jacobian matrix is

$$J(E_1) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 - 2 a \alpha p_1^* & \alpha d p_1^* \\ \frac{d}{2b} & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

(13)

The characteristic equation of the $J(E_1)$ has the form

$$f(\lambda) = \lambda^2 - Tr(J) \lambda + Det(J) = 0,$$

where $Tr(J)$ is the trace and $Det(J)$ is the determinant of the Jacobian matrix which are given by $Tr(J) = 1 - 2 a \alpha p_1^*$ and $Det(J) = -\alpha d^2 p_1^* / b$, since $Tr^2(J) - 4 Det(J) = (1-2a\alpha p_1^*)^2 + 2\alpha d^2 p_1^*/b$.

With above assumption, it is clear that $Tr^2(J) - 4 Det(J) > 0$, then the eigenvalues of Nash equilibrium are real.

If the eigenvalues of the Jacobian matrix of fixed point $E_1$ are inside the unit circle of complex plane, Nash equilibrium $E_1$ is local stability. Hence the local stability of Nash equilibrium is given by jury’s condition which are the necessary and sufficient conditions for $|\lambda| < 1, i = 1, 2$.

(1) $1 - Tr(J) + Det(J) = \frac{\alpha (a d + 2 a b + b d c_2 + 2 b^2 c_1)}{2b} > 0$,

(2) $1 + Tr(J) + Det(J) = 2 - \frac{\alpha (4b^2 + d^2)(a d + 2a b + b d c_2 + 2b^2 c_1)}{2d(4b^2 - d^2)} > 0$,

(3) $Det(J) - 1 = -\frac{\alpha d^2 p_1^*}{2b} - 1 < 0$.

It is clear that the first condition and the third condition are always satisfied. The second condition becomes

$$\alpha < \frac{4b(2b+d)(2b-d)}{(4b^2 + d^2)(a d + 2a b + b d c_2 + 2b^2 c_1)}.$$  

(14)

This equation defines a region of stability of Nash equilibrium point $E_1$ about parameter $\alpha$. If $\alpha$ is small, both players’ price will reach the Nash equilibrium point $E_1$ after rounds of games. But once there is an increase of the speed of adjustment of bounded rational player pushing $\alpha$ beyond stable region

$$\left(0, \frac{4b(2b+d)(2b-d)}{(4b^2 + d^2)(a d + 2a b + b d c_2 + 2b^2 c_1)}\right),$$

the Nash equilibrium point $E_1$ will lose stability.

**Theorem 2**
The Nash equilibrium $E_1$ of system (9) is a stable provided that

$$\alpha < \frac{4b(2b+d)(2b-d)}{(4b^2 + d^2)(a d + 2a b + b d c_2 + 2b^2 c_1)}.$$  

From Theorem 2, we can obtain the region of stability of the Nash equilibrium point $E_1$ about the model parameters. For example, an increase of the speed of adjustment of bounded rational player with the other parameters held fixed has a destabilizing effect. In factor, an increase of $\alpha$, starting from a set of parameters which ensures the local stability of the Nash equilibrium can bring out the region of the stability of Nash equilibrium point, crossing the flip bifurcation surface

$$\alpha = \frac{4b(2b+d)(2b-d)}{(4b^2 + d^2)(a d + 2a b + b d c_2 + 2b^2 c_1)}.$$  

Obviously, the stability of Nash equilibrium point $E_1$ depends on the parameters of system. We also consider other case that the parameters $a, b, d, c_1$ and $c_2$ are fixed parameters and parameter $\alpha$ which represent the market capacity of the production. In this paper, the case parameter $\alpha$ increases. Complex behaviors such as period doubling and chaotic attractors are generated where the Lyapunov exponents of the system (9) become positive.

**IV. NUMERICAL SIMULATIONS**

In this section, we use the bifurcation diagrams to illustrate the above results and finding new dynamics of system (9) as the parameters varying. The complicated dynamic features of the dynamics of a Bertrand duopoly game with heterogeneous players will be shown.

In order to study the local stability properties of the equilibrium points conveniently, we will use certain value data to simulate the dynamic evaluation of the system. Taking $a = 5, b = 0.9, c_1 = 0.1, c_2 = 0.8$ and $d = 0.3$, we can get Fig. 1 that
shows the bifurcation diagram with respect to $\alpha$, while other parameters are fixed. From Fig. 1, we can see that the orbit with initial values $(0,0)$ approaches to the stabled fixed point $(75.3, 45.3)$ for $\alpha < 0.313$. If $\alpha$ increases, the Nash equilibrium point $E_1$ becomes unstable and bifurcation scenario occurs. The first Hopf bifurcation occurs at $\alpha = 0.313$. As $\alpha$ increases, infinitely many period-doubling bifurcation of quantity behavior become chaotic.

By the definition of Lyapunov dimension [20] and simulation of the computer, we have the Lyapunov dimension of strange attractor of system (9). At the parameter values $(a,b,c_1,c_2,d,\alpha) = (5.0,9.0,1.0,8.0,3.0,46.0)$, system (9) has two different Lyapunov exponents, $\lambda_1 = 0.51$ and $\lambda_2 = -1.81$. Therefore, the system (9) has a fractal dimension $d_L = 1 + (0.51/1.81) \approx 1.28$. Then the system (9) exhibits a fractal structure and its attractor has the fractal dimension $d_L \approx 1.28$.

To demonstrate the sensitivity to initial conditions of system (9), we compute two orbits with initial points $p_{10}, p_{20}$ and $p_{10} = 0.00001, p_{20}$ at the parameter values $a=5.0, b=9.0, c_1=0.1, c_2=0.8, d=0.3$ and $\alpha = 0.46$, respectively. We can get two firms’ game results which are shown in Fig. 4. At the beginning the results are indistinguishable, but after a number of games, the difference between them builds up rapidly.

\[
d_L = 1 + \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \frac{\lambda_i}{\lambda_j}
\]
Fig. 4 Shows sensitive dependence on initial conditions, the two orbits of $p_1$ coordinates for $(a,b,c_1,c_2,d,a) = (5.0,9.0,1.0,8.0,3.0,4.06)$

The same to variable $p_2$, Fig. 5 shows the sensitivity dependence on initial conditions, $p_2$ coordinates of the two orbits with the parameter values $(a,b,c_1,c_2,d,a) = (5.0,9.0,1.0,8.0,3.0,4.6)$; the $p_2$ coordinates of initial conditions differ by 0.00001.

Fig. 5 Shows sensitive dependence on initial conditions, the two orbits of $p_2$ coordinates for $(a,b,c_1,c_2,d,a) = (5.0,9.0,1.0,8.0,3.0,4.6)$

V. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have analyzed the complex dynamics of a repeated oligopoly Bertrand model with heterogeneous players: bounded rational player and naive player. The stability of two equilibrium points is investigated in this game. We found the parameter $\alpha$ (speed of adjustment of bounded rational player) may change the stability of Nash equilibrium point and cause bifurcation and chaos to occur. For the low values speeds of adjustment, the game has a stable Nash equilibrium. Increasing the values of speeds of adjustment, the Nash equilibrium becomes unstable, through period doubling bifurcation, more complex attractors obtained, which may be periodic cycles or chaotic sets. In the above discussion, we have given economic explanations to various dynamic phenomenons in the Bertrand market and provided theoretical reference for firms.

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