Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry (TOJQI)
Volume 12, Issue 7, July 2021: 3332-3340

The Impact of Strategy Differentiation on Breaking Monopolies in Retail Industry in Libya

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Abstract

In Libya, various issues related to market monopolies have been identified, including excessive prices for customers, lower product variation, limiting output, low levels of customer surplus, productivity inefficiencies and allocation inefficiencies. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the effect of strategy differentiation on breaking monopoly in the retail industry in Libya. This study has applied a quantitative approach to collect data through a questionnaire instrument from 300 respondents. This study finds that there is a positive and significant relationship between strategy differentiations towards breaking monopoly in the retail industry in Libya. In order for a business to gain a sustainable competitive advantage, a differentiation strategy appropriate to its resources and capabilities must be determined.

Keywords: Strategy Defferntation, Breaking Monopolies, Retail Industry, and Libya.

INTRODUCTION

A pure monopoly is seldom to be found in practice, and a study of this market form provides useful insight in understanding if market conditions move in the direction of a monopoly. Such understandings are essential to the formulation of public policy for industries with the characteristics of a monopoly (Mohammed, et al., 2016). Knowledge of the theory of monopolies also provides a point of reference on the opposite end of the spectrum of market structures from perfect competition. In order to break such practices of monopoly, one needs to implement a lot of economic measures and marketing strategies to pave ways to loosen the grip of big companies or competitor's monopoly in the market (Abdul Kadir, et al., 2014).

Recently, new literature has taken a different approach in understanding the costs of monopoly (Ushchev & Zenou, 2015). Looking within industries, it examines the histories of industries in which a monopoly was destroyed and the industry transitions quickly from monopoly to competition, as well as the histories of industries that rapidly moved the opposite way, from competition to monopoly (Raju, 2021). If there are costs to monopoly, one should be able to see such costs whittled away as the monopoly is destroyed. Likewise, if an industry is monopolized, it must be possible to see the costs created by comparing the industry before and after monopolization (Hamza & Kachtouli, 2014).

Several industries have been subjected to research, including the transportation industry in the United States and U.S. manufacturers of sugar, iron ore, and cement (Abdul Kadir, et al., 2014). The historical records of these disparate industries show that there are costs of monopoly and tariffs within industries. In these industries, this new literature has shown that monopoly led, among other costs, to the following:

i) Low productivity at each factory, for any given amount of inputs, and the presence of a monopoly meant that less output was produced than under competition.

ii) Misallocation of resources between high and low productivity factories. Due to this, monopoly led to resources (capital, labor, etc.) being transferred from productive factories to unproductive factories. This misallocation occurs within an industry and is different from the misallocation that Harberger (1954) studied.

In sharp contrast to the findings of Harberger (1954), these studies show that the welfare costs associated with monopoly and tariffs are not small. The consequence of both cases (1) and (2) above is that industry output could have been produced with fewer inputs.

Output was produced with inputs X when it could have been produced with X', X > X'. One way to measure the loss, then, is to calculate the value of the "wasted" inputs (Ushchev & Zenou, 2015). Regarding the cost due to (1) above, that is low productivity, as a monopoly was destroyed in each of these industries, productivity at each factory soared. Doubling of productivities in a few years was common. The value of the wasted inputs was as much as 20 percent to 30 percent of industry value added (Arkolakis, et al., 2015).

Analysis of monopolies began by examining histories of industries; a common theme emerges from the histories as to why monopoly led to the costs (Raju, 2021). When a monopoly is created, "rents" were created. Primary conflict emerges among shareholders, managers, and employees of the monopoly while negotiation on how to divide rents among people, or more colloquially, how to "split the spoils". Mechanisms were set up to split the rents. After that, the division of rents destroyed organizations by resulting in low productivity and misallocation (Mohammed, et al., 2016).

As applied in this research, the term "monopoly" is justified to be more than an industry with a single producer (Raju, 2021). Conflict over rents emerged between different groups in the cartel, firms, workers, and managers. In some industries, there were high tariffs (and other forms of protection). High protections led to strong incentives among groups in the domestic industries to form monopolies (Raju, 2018). Firms attempted to collude, and workers formed industry-wide unions (i.e., monopolies). According to Behrens & Robert-Nicoud, (2014), a statement that "tariffs led to large welfare losses" is justified as tariffs that led to incentives to form monopolies, and then to actual monopolies, which led to large welfare losses.

The main problem related to the monopoly market was identified in the work of Hakim & Chkir, (2014), where was stated that monopolies have an unfair advantage over the competition since organizations either the only provider of a product or control most of the market share or customers for the product (Raju, 2021). Monopolies might differ from industry-to-industry, however, tend to share similar characteristics and monopolies in Libya exhibit characteristics that include: i) high or full entry barriers, where competitors not able to enter the market and the monopolies have the bargaining power to easily prevent competition from developing; ii) single seller on the market, where monopoly company becomes same as the serving industry; iii) price maker: in addition to above characteristics, company that operates the monopoly set the price of the selling product, hence, have the power of raise prices whenever necessary; iv) economies of scale: monopoly organization often produce at a lower cost than smaller companies by purchasing huge quantities of inventory, hence, receiving volume discounts that provide an opportunity of lower price production (Carballo, et al., 2016).

The aim of this study is to find out the impact of strategy differentiation on breaking monopolies in the retail industry in Libya (Raju & Poh, 2019a). This research provides a comprehensive literature review of the research variables. The following sections elaborate the methodology used in this research, as well as the tests and examinations used in the study. This paper also discusses the findings of this research and include a conclusion for this research

LITRATURE REVIEW

In this research, the theory of monopolistic is used as the main theoretical grounding in order to effectively show the essence of monopolistic competition, its main features, and characteristics so that it becomes easier to know what characterizes monopolistic companies (Chetty & Phung, 2018). Such insights that are provided by examining the theory of monopolistic competition can then provide an idea about the kind of strategies that can be used to break up the monopolistic competition of these companies. The theory of monopolistic competition by Chamberlin is described to be one of the main contributors to the theory of value and distribution in recent times (Chetty & Phung, 2018). The theory of monopolistic competition was introduced in the 1930s by a person known as Edward Chamberlin and he was responsible for creating this theory which is based on a combination of competitive and monopolistic theories (Arkolakis, et al., 2015). It was his suggestion that to consider the theory of monopolistic competition as a cure of imperfect competition would be to confuse both matters (Behrens & Robert-Nicoud, 2014).

According to him, monopolistic competition can also be viewed as a foremost type of imperfect competition. He had varied the assumption that every market approximates either perfect competition or an absolute monopoly (Raju, 2021). According to him, an imperfectly competitive market consists of a number of smaller markets and every one of these is characterized by the monopoly of the seller that is imperfectly isolated from others (Eckel & Irlacher, 2014). Chamberlin examines this imperfect market, known as the genus market, through one of the constituents' market and through various demand curves for it, which are labeled as the species curve and the average genus curve. In essence, the species demand curve represents alterations in the purchases of species when the price of that particular species is said to vary (Gajurel & Pradhan, 2012).

The average genus demand curve represents changes in the purchase of species when the prices of all species with genus also vary in order to remain identical with that of the species that is being considered (Goodwin, et al., 2009). The degree of divergence of these two demand curves is said to be reflective of the effectiveness of competition, perfect competition appearing as being a kind of limiting case whereby the species demand curve is horizontal. In the other limiting example, an absolute monopoly in so far as the genus under consideration is considered, the two curves would coincide (Hamza & Kachtouli, 2014). When selling costs are introduced, there are two types of cost curves that are found necessary and analogous to both demand curves (Mayer, et al., 2014).

The theory of monopolistic competition was proposed as being somewhat of a general theory that was meant to replace the theory of generalized competition as a departure point and as a foundation for analysis of the whole economy. Economists had vigorously debated the theory of monopolistic competition in the 1930s and the debate went on right into the 1950s and in a short span of time, monopolistic competition theory has started to dominate the sphere of economic science but there continue to be technical difficulties when it came to the mathematical modeling of monopolistic competition and it is this that has made it less attractive in science which was beginning to be formalized and that is starting to extend to the general equilibrium (Eckel & Neary, 2010). During the mid-1950s, the verdict of the debate was that the advocates and proponents of perfect competition had triumphed and those who had promoted the theory of monopolistic competition as a starting point of analyzing competition were essentially defeated (Melitz & Redding, 2015).

Differentiation can be defined in terms of how differentiation implemented by various players within the industry can assist with the breaking up of monopolies in the Libyan consumer goods industry. Differentiation makes reference to the marketing strategy used by companies to distinguish their products and services from that of competitors (Chetty & Phung, 2018). It highlights the unique offerings by the company while also highlighting the distinct differences between the company's brand that of the competitor (Piasecki, 2019).

Such differentiation can come in the form of product or service differentiation which will involve existing organizations and new entrants within the industry to make an attempt to set itself apart from the monopoly (Eckel & Irlacher, 2014). It is a fact that after a while, monopolies would start to become very arrogant and believe that their consumers would be under the grasp no matter what and thus, they do not have to make an initiative to engage in activities designed to differentiate their products and services and to provide consumers with better variety and also quality (Hakim & Chkir, 2014). A mistake that is made by large monopolies is that they usually believe that their product line is enough to satisfy the present consumer demand and that consumers in the market do not have much of a choice and are compelled to purchase from them because of a lack of competition (Melitz & Redding, 2015). However, those organizations within the industry that intend to break such a monopoly can capitalize on this and they can make an initiative to differentiate their products and services from those of the monopoly. Such differentiation will take the form of these companies providing products and services that are differentiated in terms of price, quality, and various other aspects of differentiation that consumers are likely to show important words (Raju, 2018). By engaging in effective differentiation, these organizations would be able to provide a set of products and services that are highly differentiated and which are capable of winning consumers over from these monopolies (Repon & Islam, 2016). It is very important for these organizations to embrace the product and service different strategies very vigorously to ensure that they are capable of offering a superior and highly differentiated set of products and services to the target market and this would then result in these organizations acquiring more market share away from the monopolistic competitor (Kuzucu, 2015). It can be the case that these monopolies will then initiate a response by also offering better differentiation of their products and services but if the other new companies are able to sustain the high pace of differentiation, then it is unlikely that the industry would return to the monopoly that it once was because now consumers have better knowledge and choice and are able to gain access to other options in the industry (Hakim & Chkir, 2014). This would have the effect of weakening the monopoly of the industry and even breaking altogether (Raju, 2018). Thus, the strategy of differentiation Can be regarded as a very effective strategy that can be embraced by new entrants very effectively as a means of breaking the dominance of the monopolistic company that refuses to differentiate or which does so at a very slow and regressive pace (Sufian & Habibullah, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

In quantitative research, the objective of the researcher is to determine the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable or also known as the outcome variables, within the research population (Raju, 2018). A quantitative research design is usually a descriptive or experimental research design. In this study, the descriptive research design is adopted, meaning that it will be a quantitative descriptive study that is meant to establish associations variables (Chawla & Sodhi, 2011).

In order for there to be a very precise estimate of the relationship between the variables, a descriptive study like this will usually use a sample of a few hundred respondents (Raju & Poh, 2019a). The estimate of the relationship between the variables is unlikely to be very biased if there is a high participation rate in a sample that is chosen randomly from the research population. In any kind of study, the characteristics of the research respondents can affect the relationship that is being investigated. In essence, quantitative research is all about quantifying the relationships between variables (Zohrabi, 2013).

In essence, the objective of the quantitative research method is to collect numerical data from a large group of people and then generalize those results to a much larger group of people in order to successfully explain the research phenomenon (Zohrabi, 2013). A quantitative research format is used here because the researcher wants to get a very objective and conclusive outcome to the research problem. It also provides very conclusive answers to the research questions. Besides, when data is collected and analyzed according to standardized and reputable methods, the results are usually quite trustworthy. When the sample size is statistically significant, the results are capable of being easily generalized to a much larger target group (Howell, 2013).

A quantitative survey will be conducted which will act as a method of collecting data for this research. A quantitative survey ideal for use in a cross-sectional study like this, where data is collected just once from the research population. There is generally one kind of survey that is used which is the quantitative survey (Sileyew, 2019).

The researcher chose a sample of 300 individuals. The reason why 300 respondents were chosen is because of the recommendation of researchers like Miles, et al., (2014), who claimed that for the number of variables in this study, a sample of more than 250 respondents is required to ensure statistical power and to ensure that the sample will be statistically strong. The random sampling technique involved a sample chosen based on the random of the respondents, which was used in the current study.

The SPSS was used in the study for testing the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

FINDINGS

There were several tests conducted in this study. The first test was the response rate. As this study aims to explore the role of (strategy differentiation) on the breaking monopolies in retail industry in Libya, the targeted sample is 300 respondents. As shown in Table 1, 360 questionnaires were distributed to the sample. From the distributed questionnaires, 338 were returned and collected, 300 questionnaires were the net returned and usable questionnaires with a percentage of 83.3%, as 38 questionnaires are neglected due to incomplete information.

TABLE 1: Response rate

Response Rate	
Questionnaires Distributed	360
Returned	338
Unusable Questionnaires	38
Returned and Usable	300
Not Returned	22
Response Rate	93.8 %
Usable Response Rate	83.3%

This study also applied the missing values analysis test. In some situations, one or more observation dates produce invalid or missing values . The ignore solution simply discards the missing value of the time series, but based on several scholars such to accept a missing value within 15% to 25%, and considered it common. Table 2 confirms that the total missing values numbers for the variables (strategy of differentiation and breaking monopolies) are within the acceptable range from the total observations of the study.

TABLE 2: Missing values test

Variable	**Number of Missing Values**
Strategy of Differentiation	0
Breaking Monopolies	6
Total	**6**

The Cronbach's alpha technique was used in this study to assess the reliability of measurement scales as recommended by Pallant (2013) and Sekaran & Bougie (2016). This technique helps to assess the internal consistency of scale in order to determine whether the items in the scale are measuring the same constructs and to identify whether the scales are free from any error (Pallant, 2013; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). A scale is considered reliable if the Cronbach's coefficient alpha scores exceed the minimum score of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). Using the data collected from 300 samples, the result of Cronbach's alpha scores for every measurement scale in this study are shown in Table 3.

The data in Table 3 shows that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values for all scales in this study are between 0.845 and 0.883. This indicates that the Cronbach's alpha values of all the variables exceed the recommended value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, it can be concluded that construct reliability for all scales in this study is satisfied.

TABLE 3: Reliability test

Factors	Items	Cronbach's Alpha

Strategy Differentiation	4	0.845
Breaking Monopolies	4	0.883

Convergent validity consists of establishing a link between performance on the test we are considering, and performance on some other criterion that is taken as an important indicator of the construct (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014; Hogan, 2004). One of the approaches to establish convergent validity is to compare the score of the evaluated test with another test (Carretero-Dios & Pérez, 2007; Hogan, 2004), (Raju, 2021). In this case, the concepts of convergent validity and discriminant validity take on importance. The first understood as the positive correlation between the tests considered, which would indicate that both tests recruit the same process. And the second is understood as the absence of statistical correlations between the test scores, which would indicate that the tests in question do not involve the same processes (Hogan, 2004).

For the current research, the value used to test the convergent validity is the average variance extracted (AVE). When the value of AVE is greater than 0.5 then the variable shows good construct validity. Table 4 shows that the variables (strategy of differentiation and breaking monopolies) have got acceptable AVE values, which were ranged between 0.691 and 0.745.

TABLE 4: Convergent validity

Constructs	**(AVE) (> 0.5)**
Strategy Differentiation	0.691
Breaking Monopolies	0.745

The means, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum for independents and dependent constructs were examined using the descriptive analysis. Table 5 shows the results of statistical values. All constructs in this study have been estimated on a five-point Likert scale. The results on Table 5 shows that the total mean for the study variables (strategy of differentiation and breaking monopolies) ranges between 3.009 and 3.417. These results confirm that the majority of respondents were in average agreement with the items stated in the questionnaire. Also, these results also confirm the essential role of the independent variable in breaking monopolies. Furthermore, the standard deviations for the variable were 0.674 and 0.811 respectively.

TABLE 5: Descriptive statistics

Constructs	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Strategy Differentiation	335	1.00	5.00	3.417	0.674
Breaking Monopolies	335	1.00	5.00	3.009	0.811

Based on the above tests that were conducted, the data is valid for testing the relationships of the study, this study has applied the direct effect test to find out the type of relationships between the strategy of differentiation and breaking monopolies. These results are illustrated in Table 6. This test has revealed the following conclusions:

There is a significant and positive impact of strategy of differentiation on breaking monopolies, with r = 0.168 and p-value = 0.000.

TABLE 6: Direct effect

Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
SD -> BM	0.168	0.043	3.877	0.000	Supported

Discussion

This study has found a statistically significant relationship between the proposed variables. Thus, this study can accept the proposed hypothesis. This result is in line with what was suggested in other studies, another method by which new entrants into an industry can embrace a means of competing with large monopolies and also breaking their dominance of the market is to embrace a strategy of differentiation. Differentiation can be defined in terms of how differentiation implemented by various players within the industry can assist with the breaking up of monopolies in the Libyan consumer goods industry (Raju & Poh, 2019b). Differentiation makes reference to the marketing strategy used by companies to distinguish their products and services from that of competitors. It highlights the unique offerings by the company while also highlighting the distinct differences between the company's brand that of the competitor (Piasecki, 2019).

Such differentiation can come in the form of product or service differentiation which will involve existing organizations and new entrants within the industry to make an attempt to set itself apart from the monopoly (Eckel & Irlacher, 2014). It is a fact that after a while, monopolies would start to become very arrogant and believe that their consumers would be under the grasp no matter what and thus, they do not have to make an initiative to engage in activities designed to differentiate their products and services and to provide consumers with better variety and also quality (Hakim & Chkir, 2014). A mistake that is made by large monopolies is that they usually believe that their product line is enough to satisfy the present consumer demand and that consumers in the market do not have much of a choice and are compelled to purchase from them because of a lack of competition (Melitz & Redding, 2015). However, those organizations within the industry that intend to break such a monopoly can capitalize on this and they can make an initiative to differentiate their products and services from those of the monopoly (Raju, 2021). Such differentiation will take the form of these companies providing products and services that are differentiated in terms of price, quality, and various other aspects of differentiation that consumers are likely to show important words. By engaging in effective differentiation, these organizations would be able to provide a set of products and services that are highly differentiated and which are capable of winning consumers over from these monopolies (Repon & Islam, 2016). It is very important for these organizations to embrace the product and service different strategies very vigorously to ensure that they are capable of offering a superior and highly differentiated set of products and services to the target market and this would then result in these organizations acquiring more market share away from the monopolistic competitor (Kuzucu, 2015). It can be the case that these monopolies will then initiate a response by also offering better differentiation of their products and services but if the other new companies are able to sustain the high pace of differentiation, then it is unlikely that the industry would return to the monopoly that it once was because now consumers have better knowledge and choice and are able to gain access to other options in the industry (Hakim & Chkir, 2014). This would have the effect of weakening the monopoly of the industry and even breaking altogether. Thus, the strategy of differentiation Can be regarded as a very effective strategy that can be embraced by new entrants very effectively as a means of breaking the dominance of the monopolistic company that refuses to differentiate or which does so at a very slow and regressive pace (Sufian & Habibullah, 2013).

.Conclusion

Implementation of strategies is one of the most difficult stages of the strategic management process. The selection and successful implementation of the most appropriate strategy for the structure of the business, business culture, and existing human resources are important critical success factors that will ensure the realization of business objectives and increase business performance. In an environment of uncertainty, businesses should take a strategic approach in order to take the right path. The strategic approach requires being proactive. A well-chosen strategy acts as a guide, a compass for businesses, and enables them to take the right path.

The main objective of the current study was to identify the impact of strategy differentiation on breaking monopolies in the retail industry in Libya. This study has applied the quantitative approach to collect the data through a questionnaire instrument from 300 respondents (Chetty & Phung, 2018).

This study has found that all hypotheses in the current study are supported. It shows that there are positive and significant relationships between strategy differentiation and breaking monopolies in the retail industry in Libya.

In the sector of goods retailing in which businesses operate and their intangible resources also affect the types of strategies to be chosen. In order for businesses to gain sustainable competitive advantage, differentiation strategies that are compatible with their resources and capabilities should be determined.

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