Customization and standardization of the business strategy of foreign enterprises in Vietnam. The McDonald’s case and the fast food sector

Dr. Nguyen Hoang Tien
Saigon International University, Vietnam

Abstract
The 21st century brings together a number of changes in all fields. The market evolved continuously and it is becoming more and more difficult for businesses to differentiate from their competitors and to gain and maintain a leader position in their industry. When it comes to business strategies and market approach, how some foreign typical brands in fast food industry have conducted in terms of global and multinational approach, in particular, customization and standardization Factors. The purpose of this paper is to study, demonstrate to some critical strategies of foreign businesses such as Mc. Donald’s brand as one of the most successful fast food chain in the world. This paper is organized as follows: in the first section, I will give brief introduction to the first step of it into Vietnam market parallel with some results of analyzing particular strategies used by Mc. Donald’s and how these strategies are effective. Then, in comparison with other typical brands like KFC and Lotteria is to illustrate and contrast clearly. Finally, the paper will debate about positive efficiencies as well as corporate social responsibilities.

Keywords: Business strategy, fast food industry, customization and standardization, Mc. Donald’s fast food

1. Introduction
According to the dynamics of global development, the indispensable trend in technology development, science and technology, economic activities, culture has changed rapidly and strongly. The need and the pace of human life is increasing, so eating is sometimes fast and convenient for consumers. Many companies with fast food businesses appearing that be well-received are constantly developing and serving people. Fast food is produced in packaged or pre-processed form, which is increasingly spread and adapted globally. Fast food had been rapidly growth up to 26%. It is due to fast food able to maintain a stable price, making dishes more affordable for consumers. Besides that, improving lifestyles leading by Vietnamese had help to increase the demand for fast food in Viet Nam. Government of Viet Nam allows fast food operators to operate more efficiently with franchising regulations. In Vietnam, there is a potential consumer market with nearly 100 million people, mostly young people with over 60% under 35 years of age. GDP is steadily rising at over 6%, average per capita income growth have been in the past 10 years and reached over $ 2,200 a year in 2017. The continued growth of the manufacturing sector, the market is more stable to enter for foreign investors, hence standard of living for the local increases, spending power of people increases too, market opportunity available. The promising market, especially the fast food retail market, has become a “delicious pie”, lucrative and appealing to foreign businesses. Despite KFC and Lotteria had did a nice job operate in Vietnam and popular among Vietnamese, the fast food industry is still remain competitive. With young population and fast income growth, there will be a promising market for foreign fast food companies to invest in Viet Nam (Viet Nguyen, 2014) [14] and Mc. Donald’s also appeared and divided market share. It is profitable for McDonalds’ to enter the unsatisfied market which they can maximize profits by following first the highest expected profit opportunities around the globe, and allocating resources across markets in a way that exploits all the best opportunities first (Anderson, Erin, Gatignon, 1986). Mc. Donald’s, originated in California, USA, 1954, has become one of the most recognized and respected brands in the world. The success achieved includes that they have established more than 30,000 franchising stores in 119 countries, serving more than 47 million people each day, and generating about $15
billions revenues annually. And with its focus on risk aversion, McDonalds’ can expand abroad only once they have exhausted opportunities within their home market, and that they then expand first in market that share similar culturally or in close geographic proximity to those they are already in, and that they exhaust opportunities in each market before moving into new ones (Lambson & Jensen, 1995) [10].

How can Mc. Donald’s achieve such success? There are many formulating strategies, which we could use for our analysis of their recipe of success such as Porter’s competitive strategies model, which includes differentiation and low-cost leadership; or Miles and Snow’s ‘strategy typology’, which defined prospector, defender, analyzer, and reactor strategy. Obviously, it is extremely important for Mc. Donald’s to choose the most appropriate strategy to be successful. From my personal point view, to be an Analyzer is the most suitable strategic position for them to develop their business as a whole especially when they facing an extreme complex continuously changing world. As Miles and Snow defined that “The analyzer tries to maintain a stable business while innovating on the periphery. It seems to lie midway between the prospector and the defender. Some products will be targeted toward stable environment in which an efficiency strategy designed to keep current customers is used. Others will be targeted toward new, more dynamic environment, where growth is possible.” (Daft, 2005) [5]. It is also very important to consider how Mc. Donald’s applies these strategies and how their strategies interact with their business structure and the external environment when entering the Vietnamese market.

2. Theoretical framework
Fast food is a term used to refer to foods with pre-cooked or pre-cooked ingredients that are sold in restaurants or shops that can serve customers quickly, conveniently and inexpensively. Users can eat on the spot or ask to pack away. In the fast food industry field, when foreign enterprises do business is that customization and standardization strategies play an important role to meet each different market but still guarantee international standards. Firstly, customization on the other hand refers to the tailoring of the campaign according to the needs of an individual or groups of individuals. These are high margin products where the volumes are low and the buyers are few. Secondly, standardization: achieving maximum productivity through standardization of service product and service design and delivery achieving global economy of scale and lowest unit cost which is an import tenet of economics (relative to product and production orientation). It also means “one size fits all” (Jain, 1989, pp. 70-79) [9]. There are three factors that promote standardization below. Firstly, globalization and enhancement of technology lead to international trade, easy access to communicate and travel. As Thomas L. Friedman said: “Globalization is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technology to a degree never witnesses before – in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world further, faster, deeper and cheaper than before and in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world father, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before. Secondly, standardization versus adaptation; standardization (globalization) develop standardized products marketed worldwide with a standardized marketing mix; essence of mass marketing. In terms of adaptation (localization) mix standardization and customization in the way that minimizes costs while maximizing satisfaction; essence of segmentation; think globally and act locally. Lastly, westernization and Americanization: domination of global favorite brands or products (Mc. Donald’s, Starbucks, KFC). It is assumed that public will accept global products.

- International business strategy: means effectively matching an MNEs internal strengths (relative to competitors) with the opportunities and challenges found in geographically dispersed environments that cross international borders. Such a precondition is to create value and satisfy stakeholder goals, both domestically and internationally. (Verbeke, 2013) [15].

To build the international business strategy is through four steps
Analyzing external and internal environmental factors.
Planning strategies.
Carrying out strategies.
Managing and controlling during the process of implementing strategies.

- Base on international marketing theory and criteria practice of categorising international business strategy: global consequence and local flexibility.

![Fig 1: International business strategy variants of corporations](image-url)
2.1 Multinational strategy: A strategy that aims to maximize local needs. The characteristics of the company implementing the multi-market strategy are that they customize the product and marketing strategy to fit the local requirements. At the same time as the trend of globalization, the domestic multi-market strategy has the opposite tendency to encourage companies to adapt to the worldwide activities with specific characteristics and conditions. Localization of products and brands. Informal control mechanism, simple, empowerment. Overseas operations are independent.

2.2 Global strategy: The global economic strategy is the expansion of markets beyond the national borders by standardizing products and services. The goal is to expand the market, produce more goods, have more customers and earn higher profits. In addition, the implementation of the global strategy helps companies exploit and develop their competitive advantage. Centralized power and decision making in one place (parent company). Controlling operations at the headquarters is strictly implemented. Overseas market is global and united.

2.3 International strategy: Firms exploit their core competencies in foreign markets where competitors are not available, or have weak capabilities. This is also usually the initial strategy that businesses choose when they first enter the international market. These firms tend to focus their research and development functions and produce products in their country and set up distribution as well as marketing systems in the country in which the business distribute the product.

2.4 Transnational strategy: is said to be a strategy that directly reflects the increasingly globalized business world. It is an environment that requires international business enterprises to develop ways to define their value chains while exploiting both location and difference benefits between countries, as well as exploiting them, the core competence of the business, while ensuring the adaptability and localization of products as required by each market. Compared with international strategy and transnational strategy, both global strategy and multinational strategy plays an important role in terms of business advantage of Mc. Donald’s international business strategy. For example, this low-cost helps companies easily penetrate into the international market, especially when the world is concerned about cost savings. Products that are traded in markets are the same, so businesses share product volumes between markets easily. Products produced in this market are still sold in other markets in a convenient way. Businesses do not need to place production plants in all markets. Moreover, cultural and social differences require changes in tactics. Governments around the world also often demand that the actions of companies be in line with the interests of the host country, with a local supplier capable of creating a single product that meets specific needs, consumers will no longer be forced to accept products designed for another country.

3. Research methodology
Finding out and making reference to materials from many sources on the internet such as e-zines, science pages and science researches as regards theme on some web pages: scholar.google.com.vn, www.proquest.com, books.c.org, slideshare. This means the research focuses on how Mc. Donald’s has achieved enormous success, its best practices in the global food industry, international growth trends and challenges, and various lessons that have been learned from their expansion in foreign countries (Mujtaba & Patel, 2007) [12]. Ethnographic research is also known as the method of the people. An example of research on applied ethnographic research is the study of a particular culture and their understanding of the role of a particular disease within their culture. Grounded theory is an inductive type of research, fundamental in observations or data, including quantitative data, records, interviews, observations and survey. To demonstrate clearly about international enterprise strategy in Vietnam, some other remarkable cases such as Lotteria, KFC as well as the fast food sector in general and Mc. Donald’s case in particular. The paper explores Mc. Donald’s global strategy as well as its expansion strategy. Aside from the globalization evaluation, this study also examines the entry mode in Vietnam (Abiri, 2006).

4. Research Result
4.1 Mc. Donald’s brand in the first step into Vietnam market.
After the government signed the Vietnam-US Bilateral Trade Agreement in 2001, like many other US corporations, Mc. Donald’s has also searched for opportunities in a surprising new market. Mc. Donald’s has visited Vietnam and announced plans to open outlets in Vietnam market to capture public’s attention. The reason of McDonald visited to Vietnam is to finding business opportunities and profitable market (“Mc. Donald’s and The Great Challenges It Faces When Entering Vietnam”, 2012).

Mc. Donald's group is the largest fast-food retail chain in the world, serving 68 million visitors a day in 119 countries. In 2013, McDonalds is officially in Vietnam. Before entering the Vietnamese market, Mc. Donald’s spent quite a long time researching and exploring Vietnamese habits, cultures and ways of life. In each of the different markets will have different characteristics, so from the very first steps Mc. Donald’s is very thorough in his business strategy. The standardization of economic strategy is top priority and strict. However, as soon as stepping into Vietnam, Mc. Donald’s has two basic difficulties. Mc. Donald’s core product is burger is not a dish that many Vietnamese interest. Meanwhile, Vietnamese bread is very popular, eaten in consumer habits and cheaper than burgers. Their challenges are still old stories: menus, tastes, service, in addition to the competition is beginning to fierce. As usual, Mc. Donald's chose Saigon as the starting point. With the highest income in the country, Saigon is attracted by the dynamic pace and lifestyle is slightly west. Firstly, the Saigon people tend to eat-out. After a day work, they tend to eat the whole family outside rather than go home and cook like the North style. Secondly, the Saigon people are receptive and welcoming from exotic foods.

4.2 Customization and standardization in McDonald's business strategy
First of all, it is late entry and market saturation for McDonald entering into Vietnam market. McDonald will face intense competition from both local and foreign competitor in Vietnam (Abiri, 2013) [1]. For an example,
KFC, Loteria, Jolibee, Pizza Hut and others have been exist in Vietnam’s fast food industry for few years. But even when Mc. Donald’s inherits optimistic effects from previous brands, the Vietnamese market is not entirely easy market to newcomer like it. Mc. Donald’s is one of enterprises select strategy for standardizing its product. Mc. Donald’s serves customers with the best quality food. The raw materials for processing are placed and purchased from suppliers for a long time. The food is highly prepared and consistent. Mc. Donald’s dishes are considered and customized according to the customer’s criteria. Mc. Donald’s serves customers with the best quality food. The raw materials for processing are placed and purchased from suppliers for a long time. The food is highly prepared and consistent. Mc. Donald’s original goal was to aim for a standardized menu with ingredients that tasted the same regardless of country. But when it comes to operate in different countries, Mc. Donald’s realizes that a little change in taste and ingredients will make the locals more satisfied, which also makes Mc. Donald’s successful. Secondly, with the ability to anticipate and satisfy the real needs of customers is their greatest success, for instance, the store did not work well on Friday because most of the population was Catholic and they did not eat meat on this day. Mc. Donald’s has decided to add fish sandwich menus and apply to stores around the world. Furthermore, Mc. Donald’s is especially focused on designing and opening international standard training courses to train future franchisees so that ensure the full range of Mc. Donald’s restaurants and the management skills. Lastly, Mc. Donald’s orientation is the quality standard. The strict quality standards that Mc. Donald’s sets out are for the input material supplier. Supply must be good and quality to create a safe product for consumers. So, to recruit a suitable supplier, Mc. Donald’s designed the program so that its supply partners were allowed to become input suppliers. Mc. Donald’s will send its staff directly to inspect and supervise the quality to choose the best supplier. To the standardization factor – global strategy has exploited the economy of area and explored the impact of experience curve. When the business sector of the company is in the business incentive policy of the country that the company is targeting. Products brought to these countries are the inherent products of the business they not only meet many trade barriers but also receive the favor of the governments of these countries. At the same time, it does not bear much opposition from the organizations and people of that country. Otherwise, the products of the company in each market are the same, ie with the same type of products will be brought to the whole domestic and foreign markets where the change in shape, design, quality, is not significant even without. Rather, there is not much difference in the demand for a particular type of consumer product in every market. In comparison with customization factor – multinational strategy, the key advantage of multi-inland strategy is that it meets local requirements. This strategy allows companies to research the preferences of consumers in different markets, responding quickly and effectively to new consumer preferences. The result that companies expect when introducing new products is that consumers will perceive value higher than competitors’ products, allowing the company to adopt a multi-locational strategy that is priced.

In contrary, the disadvantage of a multi-inland strategy is that it does not allow the company to exploit the economies of scale in developing, producing or marketing products. It is often the case that a multi-national strategy raises costs for international companies and forces them to set higher prices to recover those costs.

4.3 Other illustrative cases of international business strategy

4.3.1 KFC case

The main competitor that McDonald will face in Vietnam is KFC which has 130 outlets and operate within year. Vietnamese customer familiar with KFC brand with a growth rate of 20 to 30 new restaurants per year, said Le Hoai Nam, KFC Vietnam’s marketing director. KFC stands for Kentucky Fried Chicken, one of the brands of Yum Brands Inc. (USA). KFC specializes in fried and grilled chicken products, with accompanying dishes and sandwiches. Currently there are more than 20,000 KFC restaurants in 109 countries and regions worldwide. KFC entered Vietnam in 1997, KFC opened its first restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City. Nowadays, the KFC restaurant chain has grown to more than 140 restaurants in more than 21 major cities and provinces across the country, employing more than 3,000 workers and creating more jobs in the subsidiary industry in Vietnam. With this success, KFC encountered many difficulties when entering the Vietnamese market in 1997. Phrase “fast food” and its taste is very little known, so KFC has suffered losses in Vietnam market for seven years. Facing with this difficulty, KFC has launched an important strategy of product of pricing and distribution system. KFC first introduced a global standardization strategy:

Unique Kentucky Fried Chicken: A delicious, crispy fried chicken made from 11 different spices and herbs is the cause of millions of KFC fans everywhere without exception Vietnam. Professional service style: KFC team always welcome customers with friendly smiles and ready to serve with the most speedy manner. Dense distribution system, located in places convenient for guests. Customer service: the style of service is quite unique, the common feature is self-service to create equality. Diverse menu is suitable for each locality: Beside traditional fried chicken, KFC also bring dishes suitable with taste and demand of consumers in each locality. Free car service. Business location: KFC stores all have very nice location, right in front of large, airy streets. Almost its restaurant system is whether in a supermarket or a shopping center where there are so many shoppers. Space is cool and designed for all ages. This can be both a destination for families and a place for gathering friends. KFC always ensure the quality of its products. Strong human resources, professional training: After having set the standard for the whole KFC system in order to have a stable and growing position in Vietnam. KFC constantly researches the market to come up with the best solution.

4.4 Product Strategy: Since joining the Vietnamese market, KFC has been striving to differentiate its product strategy so as to enhance competitiveness with other rivals by flavoring the mixture of 11 spices. Not only it does make a difference, but diversifies the product to create a very rich menu as well. Besides traditional dishes such as Hamburger fried chicken, KFC has processed a number of dishes to serve Vietnamese foods such as crispy boneless chicken,
soft bread, rice chicken, mixed cabbage Jumbo; the size of Hamburger also changed, becoming smaller to fit the Vietnamese size. Product catalogs are sorted by categories to help consumers easily choose their favorite food.

KFC not only focus on developing new product lines, changing products to catch up with consumers' tastes but also paying special attention to the health of customers. For example, KFC has replaced soybean oil for vegetable oils because the company claims that vegetable oils affect cardiovascular health.

4.5 Price strategy: More than seven years of penetrating into the Vietnamese market, KFC has adopted a low price strategy to extend the market and gradually build a system that is close to consumers. KFC has been popular with many consumers and has a large market share in Vietnam.

4.6 Distribution strategy: KFC chooses distribution locations in buildings, supermarkets, bookstores, trade centers, Co-opmart, Bigc, and so on. Recently, KFC has expanded its restaurants in pavements and city center location.

4.7 Promotion strategy: KFC always promote brand advertising and offer many attractive promotions.

4.8 Lotteria case
Lotteria is a well-known brand in Korea named after its parent company – Lotte. It is now available throughout East Asia. So far, there are about 1,600 Lotteria stores worldwide and more than 210 stores in Vietnam. The first store was in Vietnam in February 1998 in Ho Chi Minh City after many competitors in fast food, Lotteria had strong marketing and sales strategies, for instance, Lotteria has started to focus on hamburger as a key product, with this strategy has brought Lotteria 70% market share, KFC 20%, Jolibee 5%, and the remaining 5% to local businesses.

In order to develop globally, Lotteria also offers standardization such as: - Brand: with three main colors are red, white, yellow as well as youthful, dynamic and warm bring guests the gentle comfortable feeling as in the dining room of the family. The symbol is also quite simple with the letters L and O yellow stand together to remind people to associate hamburger - products typical for Lotteria brand.

4.9 Packaging products: to fast food, packaging products are also very important. Lotteria always aims to clean, safe and hygienic standards. As for the delivery of packaging not only beautiful but also focus on food preservation. Lotteria is based on recycling programs and environmental friendly policies, so food is stored in recycled plastic and glassware.

4.10 Customer service: Lotteria always has services to meet the needs of customers according to the criteria of the company is to help customers save time such as delivery service, party organization, consulting and so forth. Although coming after KFC, Lotteria accounted for 70% of the market by offering smart strategies for product diversification: Lotteria itself has a Korean tradition, but when it penetrates to Vietnam. In comparison with diversifying its products, it also creates a very rich menu for young people.

In Vietnam, the menu is diverse, attractive to meet the needs of Vietnamese people with dishes, accompanied by refreshments suitable for customers who want to experience new flavors.

If KFC is loyal to chicken products, Lotteria also has beef, pork, fish, squid, shrimp, many choices for customers. Vietnamese youths are especially interested in listening to Korean music, watching Korean movies, and eating Korean food. Taking advantage of this feature, Lotteria has invited the influential people in the entertainment industry to promote the brand. Moreover, many Korean films were filmed in the Lotteria store, which also increased the interest of Vietnamese people with Lotteria.

4.11 Comparison between KFC brand and Lotteria brand
Two brands have some similar points in business activities:

4.12 Business products: Fast food, menus are all kinds of foods, including fried chicken, fries, hamburgers and soft drinks such as ice cream, Pepsi Cola. The quality is guaranteed to be safe.

4.13 Price: mainly ranged from 20.000 to 60.000 VND / piece. The store location is located in the lobby of the Coopmart supermarket, where many people come to buy and can stop to enjoy.

4.14 Space: clean, airy, use the main color is red and yellow.
Service style young, enthusiastic, attentive staff, history and uniforms.

But still have some differences

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<th>Table 1: Differences between global food and beverage corporations: KFC Vietnam and Lotteria Vietnam</th>
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5. Discussion
Can see the fast food world has very successfully created a new industry of making huge changes to the way and time devoted to human food consumption. Currently, the fast-food industry not only was created to serve the drive quick meals in cars, but also become the investment potential for many businesses. This development as well as many new elements in cultural life, the spirit of the people, especially in the developing countries such as Vietnam. This article’s analyses is to study and review strategies as well as
solutions that overseas fast food businesses have done for expanding their brands in other countries. Especially, Mc. Donald’s group is in Vietnam with customization factor – multinational strategy and standardization factor – global strategy. From early days in Vietnam, McDonald has expanded system strategy with certainty, ensuring every point opens operate effectively. The most important things to McDonald is not only a number of restaurants but also the quality of service and customer experience: McDonald’s seeks to make customers more satisfied with fast service, seeks to make customers more satisfied by creating a clean environment, finding ways to make customers more satisfied with the higher quality products, seeking to make customers more satisfied with the affordable prices. Thus it can be said of McDonald’s key to success is their focus on customer satisfaction. Besides, having come before Mc. Donald’s other brands such as KFC and Lotteria have encountered a lot of difficulties and challenges; then, they have set their own criteria to adapt with current market but in some extend they still guarantee global competitive ability. According to cases of mentioned typical brands, we can realize that marketing research is very important because it helps save time, limit risks, in addition to, creative and customized element are essential to international business strategy of foreign enterprises.

6. Conclusion and recommendation

6.1 Conclusion

Mc. Donald’s Vietnam is now on the road leads to success in the future. However, Mc. Donald’s had a late entrance to Vietnamese’s fast food market so they still face some challenges. Fundamentally, to achieve a prospective achievement, Mc. Donald’s has to make long term goal by maintaining its core strength which emphasize on having a continuous products development. Mc. Donald’s Vietnam also has to catch up with the economic growth of Vietnam to create many advantages and stand out from its competitors.

There has been limitation in this paper. Its shortcoming is not to conduct empirical study on a wide scale. The qualitative research method is through searching datum, information from previous articles and available reviews. So, it is very hard to gather precise and detailed input data for further researches. Hope that the research result of this article may serve as preliminary and precondition for such further researches.

Besides the results and analyses in this article, we would like to issue a matter of corporate social responsibility of foreign business. Social Responsibility is a field of research of both academic and business practice which investigates the processes and solutions in order to guarantee a sustainable development that is a strategic balance between economic growth and social and environmental development at both macro level (international, regional, national, local) and micro level (level of enterprises). Nowadays, in the context of globalization process, in developing countries, policy and regulations in this area are subjects of constant changes and adaptations, spreading from previous financial model focusing on profit only, to today’s social model of corporate social responsibility focusing on people, planet and profit.

7. Recommendation

Mc. Donald’s Vietnam has good strategies in promoting their products. However, some recommendations for this brand has suggested: Firstly, McDonald’s should consider about having the delivery service for their products. Consumers sometimes enjoy eating at their home and do not want to waste time coming to store to order food. Delivery service makes customers feel comfortable and convenient especially those customers who are busy with their work all the time. Secondly, Mc. Donald’s should care more about advertising campaign. They can promote the products’ brand not only through press, social network but also on media either. Children and teenagers spends a lot of their time watching movies and television shows, that’s the reason why advertising products on media can bring benefits to the company by attracting more attention of the customers. This may include promoting consumer health matters as well. Last but not least, Mc. Donald’s should make their restaurants look always contemporary and bring refreshment to their customers in order to build strong customer relationship and maintain the company’s competitive advantage over other competitors.

In order to strengthen company’s competitive advantage, we recommend Mc. Donald’s to apply the localization strategy in their business at Vietnam. This is because the products of Mc. Donald’s were culturally different from what Vietnamese normally eat. The information stated that the majority of Vietnamese foods will add in lots of fresh herbs and vegetables where the foods was considered as the healthy mix of light and refreshing favors with very little added fats (Sim, 2013) [13]. Besides, Vietnamese foods also depend deeply on the rice and peanuts. Therefore, Mc. Donald’s must localize their menu based on the culture of Vietnam to suit the Vietnamese’s tastes and preferences. As an example, McDonald’s can introduce the dishes like “McThai” that combine a variety of herbs, vegetables and meats. In addition, we recommend that Mc. Donald’s can be more focus on children market because Mc. Donald’s had built playground and providing a fantastic toys to the children. Whatever how different the tastes and the local needs and wants are, McDonald’s has paid considerable attention to the children in each country they have entry (Han, 2008). One of the reasons for Mc. Donald’s that needs to concentrate on the children market in Vietnam which is there are almost 26 million of children population in Vietnam, thus focusing on children can build the stable business in Vietnam.

8. References


