

Determinants of Destination Branding for Revisiting: With Special Reference to Tourism in Sri Lanka.

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Abstract: The study was designed to explain the relationship between customer brand equity towards Sri Lanka as a tourism destination and customer revisit intention. The relationship between dimensions of Customer Based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination; brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty, with revisit intention are examined through a survey method. The results show that the customer brand equity has a significant positive relationship with the intention to revisit, bring up several policy implications for the tourism strategy.

Keywords: Customer Based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination (CBBETD), Brand awareness, Perceived quality, Brand image, Brand loyalty.

Introduction

Destination marketing has become an increasingly popular national strategy in the globalised world and many countries have identified it as one of the major national income generator. Tourist destinations are mushrooming all over the world and the entry of many new destinations in to the market is forcing all destinations to compete in the battle to win more tourists (Konecnik, 2002). Since most of the destinations pop up with a same theme: 'pleasure tourism' and compete for the same target market portion, the competition has increased to even greater extents than one can imagine. To achieve their goals, destinations are seeking every possible means to remain competitive in the international market (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gomezelj & Omerzel, 2006). Among these concerns, how to attract the tourist to revisit and/or recommend the destination to

others has become a crucial for the success of destination tourism development (Chen C.F. & Tsai D.C., 2006). Hence, this research attempts to establish a deeper understanding of these dynamic and challenging destination marketing strategies.

Tourism destination branding has become an effective tactic for building unbeaten tourism images in today's competitive tourism market and it is consider as a useful tool in strategic marketing management decision making. Destination marketing is seen as a proactive, strategic, visitor-centred approach to the economic and cultural development of a location, which balances and integrates the interests of visitors, service providers, and the community. When marketing can be simply defined as product selling related overall activities, destination marketing can be identified as, marketing of a place or a destination.

Within the last few years, the attention has been oriented towards the development of a destination brand, which should have a strong and unique position in the mind of potential tourist (Konecnik & Ruzzier, 2006). But the research stream of destination branding is merely in its infancy (Cai 2002; Morgan, Pichard & Pride 2002). Since nineteenth century, scholars have started to develop an acceptable frame work, which can apply branding theories in tourism destination branding. At that time, many scientific contributions were on product branding; but there was a significant problem as to whether the same branding principles can be applied in destination branding. Chernatony and Dall'Olmo (1999) emphasises that concept of brand is similar between products and services. Kotler

(2009) explains that ‘ a product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a need or want and it can be a physical product, service, retail store, person, organization, place, or idea ’. Giving attention to the above definitions this study goes in-depth to identify the product as a place. Henceforth, wherever the word product is mentioned in this study, it refers to a travel destination.

American Marketing Association (AMA) (1960) defines brand as; “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors”. The marketing activities relate to above can be identifying as branding. However the demand-side perspective on tourism destination has not been uniquely defined in the literature. The main purpose of branding is to possess a unique position on a customer’s mind for reconsideration. Hence in this study, it is looked at from customer’s point of view (output perspective). Branding attach different ‘value added dimensions’, in order to mould the product that comes from the manufacturer. These different value added dimensions are identified as ‘brand elements’. Aaker (1991) mentioned that “having a dominant brand provides a strong competitive advantage which allocates a unique position in a customer’s mind, to be reconsidered in the future”. Marketers are keen on knowing, the value of the ownership their brands possess on customer’s mind and dedicated to knowing the result of their marketing efforts. When brand is considered as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design unique to a product, the difference between assets and liabilities attached to such a brand is called as brand equity. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as ‘a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a customer’. Brand equity can be examined through financial or customer perspective. Keller & Lehmann (2006) mentioned that in financial perspective, asset value of the brand is evaluated and in customer perspective, consumer’s response (words and actions) to a particular brand is evaluated. According to Keller (1993) the motivations behind studying about brand equity are; to measure value of brand for accounting purposes (financial

motivation) and to improve marketing productivity (strategy based motivation). In this paper, consideration is given only for customer based brand equity. Aaker (1991) has identified the dimensions of the customer based brand equity as “brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary brand assets”. In following Aaker, (1991, 1996); Keller,(1993, 1998) as well as Yoo & Dontu, (2001 & 2002); Maja Konecnik (2006) in her research concluded that both approaches explained by Aaker and Keller included similar dimensions which could represent a common measure of a customer’s evaluation of a brand. Then Konecnik developed a Customer Based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination (CBBETD) framework which shows the dimensions of brand equity for a tourism destination which comprises four dimensions; awareness, image, quality and loyalty. This research employs this framework as the basis for measuring the nature of the construct of brand equity.

Brand Equity creates associations that can derive market positions, long term sustainability and the capability of resisting aggressive competitors through delighted customers. It is considered that the high brand equity levels are known to lead higher consumer preference and purchase intentions (Cobb- Walgren, Ruble, & Dontu, as cited in Chieng & Lee, 2011, p.34). Delighted customers are the long term assets of a destination who creates the possibility of revisit. Identifying the determinants of intention to revisit vital in destination branding hence the above given reason. Many scholars were interested in the field and recently some of them have identified the determinants of intention to revisit as consumers satisfaction, perceived value and past behaviour. This research attempts to explore this relationship from the perspective of brand equity.

Investigating the relationship between the determinants of brand equity and revisit intention add value in the destination marketing. Measuring the customer brand equity towards the destination shows, where do we stand now and their intention to revisit the destination shows what should we do next and how will be our potential market. Identify the relationship between brand equity and intention to revisit will strengthen the future marketing strategies by providing

answers for these questions, which has not yet given adequate attention in the existing literature.

Hence, the first aim of this research is to explore the nature of this important relationship between brand equity and the intention to revisit in the context of Sri Lankan tourism industry by asking the main research question of,

RQ1. What is the nature of relationship between the destination brand equity and the revisit intention of tourists?

Review of Challenges for Sri Lanka Tourism Sector

Sri Lanka is one of the most preferred tourism destinations which are well known all over the world. After a dark era of 30 years war, today this nation is celebrating its democracy. This has enlightened Sri Lankan tourism industry by giving it a rebirth. Rapid expansion in marketing strategies have arisen the need for research about Sri Lanka tourism industry. Furthermore, in order to fulfil the policy targets assigned to it, the tourism industry in Sri Lanka must maintain a competitive position in the global environment. It is essential in identifying brand equity that Sri Lanka copes with as a tourist destination from the customer point of view in driving marketing strategies.

Even though Sri Lanka as a tourism destination has been competing well in this arena with its new post war targets and new outlook, the existing literature on brand equity related to Sri Lanka destination marketing, is still sparse. There is a knowledge gap among practitioners and institutions in this industry on, what is meant by the destination brand equity, what perspective it should be viewed from and how it will affect on repeat visitations. Hence, identifying how the customer brand equity affects in creating the intentions to revisit Sri Lanka is vital. Also, the prevailing models and frameworks are not empirically tested in Sri Lankan tourism context, which is more vital during its post war escalating era. Having said that, the ultimate goal of building brand equity is to ensure long term sustainability through delighted

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customers; for delighted customers are the long term assets of a destination, who creates the possibility for revisiting.

In contribution the Sri Lankan tourism industry, this study also attempt to answer the second research question of,

RQ2. What are the implications of the findings of the study for the current tourism strategy/policy practices in Sri Lanka?

Theoretical Framework

Based on above discussions, the conceptual framework for this research has been developed as shown below Fig. 2.3, which reflects the variables that influence the revisit intention. The box represents the independent construct, which is associated with number of variables and the circle represent the dependent variable. This conceptual model represents a relationship between the construct: CBBETD and the interested dependent variable: the intention for revisit, which is called as a proposition. Some indirect support for this proposed model can be found in the past literature; however most of them are using the earlier models presented by Aaker (CBBE) and Keller (2003) and relating to different type of products and industry contexts. For example, Washburn and Plank (2002) discovered a significant correlation between the CBBE (in terms of perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty and brand awareness) and repurchase intention. Furthermore, Zhou (2010) found that strong brand equity leads to customers' higher perceived value, which increases their revisit intentions in the context of budget hotel industry in Shanghai. Hence, this research contributes to this stream of literature by establishing a new understanding of the model in the context of tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

The model is broken down in to four dimensions for the purpose of measurement, so that the model includes four independent variables; brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty and one dependent variable: Revisit intention. Arrow represents the predicted relationship. Followed by this four directional research (alternative) hypothesis were developed to measure the tentative relationship between customer brand equity and intention to revisit.

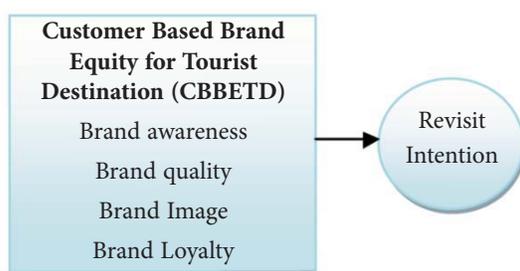


Figure 1.0: Dimensions of customer based brand equity and their relationship with revisit intention

Brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker 1991). Baldauf, A., Cravens, K.S., & Binder, G. (2003), in their study of brand awareness, perceived value and brand loyalty on purchase intention, came across with the finding that customer who knows the logo and brand well makes the purchase decision easily or pay premium price. Moreover, Zhou (2010) stated that building customers' brand awareness/brand association contributes to the increase of the revisit intentions.

H1: Higher the destination awareness higher will be the intention for revisit.

Bakera & Crompton (2000), in their study have mentioned that performance quality has a direct influence on behavioural intention. Bigne, Sanchez M. & Sanchez J. 2001, mentioned in their study that perceived value affect revisit intention. Bloemer, Ruyter & Wetzels (1997) and Jones, Beatty & Motersbaugh (2002) pointed out that there is a positive relationship between perceived service quality and repurchase intention, recommendation and resistance to better alternatives, which can be interpreted as customer loyalty. Zhou (2010) in his study about impact of brand equity towards revisit intention on hotel industry found that perceived quality is the most significant predictor for perceived value, which has a significant impact on hotel revisit intention.

H2: Higher the destination perceived quality higher will be the intention for revisit.

High levels of brand awareness and positive brand image should increase the probability of brand choice, as well as produce greater customer loyalty and

decrease vulnerability to competitive marketing actions (Keller, 1993). Chi & Qu (2008), in their study have found that destination image affect significantly attribute satisfaction. Beliefs about unique attributes and benefits for brands that consumer value more favourably than competitive brands can lead to a greater likelihood of the consumer choosing the former brand (Keller 2003). Further Chen & Tsai (2006) explored that destination image has the most important effect on behavioural intentions (intention to revisit and willingness to recommend) and destination image influences the behavioural intentions in two ways: directly and indirectly.

H3: Higher the destination image higher will be the intention for revisit.

Brand loyalty considered as repeated purchasing behaviour under conditions of strong sensitivity (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Bowen & Shoemaker (1998), in their study mentioned that loyal customers are less likely to switch to a competitor solely because of price, and loyal customers also make more frequent purchases than comparable non-loyal customers. In highly competitive hospitality industry, the key to increasing and preserving market share is not just winning new customers but also keeping them for a long time. Brand loyalty is one of the most important competitive survival tools because loyal customers provide; repeat business, higher market shares and profits, referrals, and competitive advantage (Tepeci, 1999). Baldauf, Cravens, & Binder (2003), in their study on brand awareness, perceived value and brand loyalty on purchase intention found that when a customer is brand loyal make purchase decision easily or pay premium price. Zhou (2010) in his study about impact of brand equity towards revisit intention on hotel industry found that brand loyalty has a great impact on hotel revisit intentions, followed by brand awareness/brand association and perceived quality. Loyalty represent the behaviour of re-purchase intention, recommendation- to – others of customers, and giving praise (Parasuraman, Zeithmal & Berry, 1985). Jones & Sasser (1995) noted that loyalty is the re-purchase intention of customers towards specific product or service.

H4: Higher the destination brand loyalty higher will be the intention for revisit.

Research Methodology

A positivism research with deductive research approach is utilised with the explanatory purpose of identifying the determinants of brand equity of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination and their relationship between tourists' revisiting intentions. Survey research strategy is employed with the questionnaire method in data collection, under a cross sectional time horizon basis. According to Sounders et al. (2003), questionnaires can be used for descriptive or explanatory research, since it is useful in gathering standardised and easy comparison data. A quantitative method was employed with the objective of testing the hypothesis. Owing to the time and cost constraints, haphazard (convenience) non-random sampling method was used.

A self administered delivery and collection questionnaire containing close ended category and scale questions with bi-polar five point and ten point Likert-scales, which were anchored at one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part includes demographical questions and the second part examined Customer Based Brand Equity for Tourism Destination (CBBETD) by using 35 indicators, which were sub-divided to measure each variable by allocating five for awareness, sixteen for image, ten for quality and four for loyalty variables. In measuring the CBBETD, close ended Likert-typed questions were used. These versions of measures are adopted from the work of Konecnik (2005), where she presents both the conceptual model and its empirical verification of the CBBETD model. Subsequently, these measures were also used and empirically tested in her later study on Croatian-Based Brand Equity for Slovenia as a tourism destination (Konecnik, 2006). All variables measure in positive direction, except three negative directed questions (one for awareness direction, second for image and third for quality dimension). Sounders et al (2003, p. 314) advised to include both positive and negative statements, so as to ensure the respondents reads each one carefully and thinks about which box to tick. These variables were reversed scored during the analysis.

In measuring the intention to revisit, this research adapted close ended questions. The measures

were originally used by Petrick, Duarte and Norman (2011) in their study; an examination of the determinants of entertainment vacationers' intention to revisit. Past behaviour and perceived value is measured by using a bi-polar five point Likert scale where as satisfaction was measured with ten point Likert scale. In analysis this ten point scale was reserved in to five point scale. Prior to distribute the questionnaire it has been under gone through a pilot test by using ten responders.

The quantitative data for the study were gathered from a primary source which is a sample of 50 foreigners who visit Sri Lanka during the month of August. August shows an average tourist arrival from all the countries and this reason motivated to select this month for the data collection in order to reduce the biasness. Data collected from two provinces in Sri Lanka; Western and Central province. Questionnaires were given for randomly selected sample in these two provinces which include visitors from all over the world who belongs to different age groups, different educational levels and employment status, irrespective of their gender.

Analysis

Data were analyzed by using multiple liner regression method and correlation analysis was also employed to identify possible correlations among the variables. Meantime, a reliability test was conducted in measuring the reliability of the variables. Internal consistency of the variables was identified by using Cronbach's Alpha. Descriptive analysis was conducted in identifying the normality. The mathematical equation for the proposed model is shown below:

Linear Regression Model

$$IR = \alpha + \beta_1 * X_1 + \beta_2 * X_2 + \beta_3 * X_3 + \beta_4 * X_4 + \epsilon \quad [1]$$

Where,

IR = Intention to revisit

α = Intercept

β = Regression coefficients

X1 = Brand Awareness

X2 = Brand Image

X3 = Perceived Quality
X4 = Brand Loyalty
é = Error term

loyalty does not rise up the doubt of validity of using them as two variables since it is below the cut of point of 0.75 ($r = .715 < 0.75$).

Results and Discussion

As shown in the Tab.1.1 below, Revisit intention is positively correlated with Total awareness ($r = 0.435$, $p < 0.01$), Total Image ($r = 0.280$, $p < 0.05$), Total quality ($r = 0.290$, $p < 0.05$), and Total Loyalty ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$). Total quality positively correlated with Total Image ($r = 0.501$, $p < 0.01$). Cohen (1988) in his book mentioned that following guidelines can be follow in measuring the strength of the relationship.

$r = 0.1 - 0.29$ or $(-0.1) - (-0.29)$ small
 $r = 0.3 - 0.49$ or $(-0.3) - (-0.49)$ medium
 $r = 0.5 - 1.0$ or $(-0.5) - (-1.0)$ large

Table 1.1 Correlations

	Total Awareness	Total Image	Total Quality	Total Loyalty
Total Awareness				
Total Image	.272			
Total Quality	.156	.501(**)		
Total Loyalty	.345(*)	.025	.011	
Revisit Intention	.435(**)	.280(*)	.290(*)	.715(**)

N= 50

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to these guidelines it is shown that revisit intention has positive small relationships with quality and image, a positive medium strength with awareness and positive large relationship with loyalty. All independent variables show statistically significant (< 0.05) correlation with the dependent variable. Considering the coefficient of determination, total awareness shared 19% variance, total image shared 8% variance, total quality 8.4% and loyalty shared 36.6% variance. The correlation between revisit intention and

Multiple Linear Regressions

Table 1.2 Mahalanobis Distance - Extreme Values

	Case Number	Value
Highest	1	36
	2	22
	3	7
	4	4
	5	33
Lowest	1	44
	2	15
	3	10
	4	4
	5	49

In order to find out the outliers Mahalanobis distance was considered. According to Pallant (2005) the critical value for model with four independent variables is 18.47 and according to the analysis conducted to identify top five maximum Mahalanobis distance values there was no any case in the data sheet which exceed this critical value.

In testing the assumptions made in multiple regression analysis multicollinearity was tested by considering the tolerance value and the VIF (Variance inflation factor) value. According to Pallant (2005), the commonly used cut off point of tolerance is 0.10 (above .10) and VIF is 10 (below 10). All four variables; awareness, image, loyalty and quality are above normal cut off point and says that the multicollinearity assumption is not violated.

The correlation of four independent variables with dependent variable, after all the intercorrelations among the four independent variables are taken in to account is 0.800 ($R = 0.800$). In considering how much of the variance in the dependent variable i.e. revisit intention is explained by the model, is presented in the model summary result produced by the regression analysis under the heading R Square, it was noted as

0.639 and as a percentage value 63.9%. This means that the model explain 63.9% of the variance in revisit intention. Tabachnick & Fidell explanation (as cited in Pallant, 2005) says that when a small sample is involved, the R square value in the sample tend to be a rather optimistic overestimation of the true value in the population. Adjusted R square recommended having a better estimation of the true population value. In this study the Adjusted R square value is 0.607 and says that 60.7 % of the variance in revisit intention explains by the model. The F value is obtained as 19.940. So it can be explain that the model in this study reaches the required statistical significance level (i.e. Sig. = .000).

The main focus of linear regression analysis was to test the hypothesis from H1 to H4 which were based on expected relationship between customer brand equity and revisit intention.

Table 1.3 Coefficients

	Standardized	T	Sig.	Collinearity	
	Coefficients			Tolerance	VIF
	Beta				
(Constant)		-.600	.551		
Awareness	.137	1.359	.181	.795	1.259
Image	.127	1.265	.212	.7901	.266
Quality	.238	2.439	.019(*)	.8431	.186
Loyalty	.694	7.149	.000(**)	.8501	.176

Note : N:50

** Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

* Significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

According to the test results presented in the table, the largest beta coefficient value is 0.694 which is for total loyalty emphasizing that loyalty made the strongest unique contribution in explaining the dependent variable, when the variance explained all the other variables in the model is controlled for. The lowest contribution made by total Image which gives the beta value as 0.127.

H1 is developed to test the relationship between customer awareness and revisit intention. The related test results stated as ($\beta = 0.137$, $t = 1.359$) and it does not support the expected relationship between awareness and revisit intention emphasizing that even

though total awareness shows a positive significant correlation it will not be a significant factor for building revisit intention in the context of Sri Lanka. However, this factor shows a considerable correlation with brand loyalty, which is a highly significant factor in the model. Therefore, lack of statistical significance cannot undermine the practical consideration of meeting at-least some minimum standards of this aspect of branding strategy in practice.

The test results for the expected relationship between quality and revisit intention was supported ($\beta = 0.238$, $p < 0.05$, $t = 2.439$) and accepted H2 saying that higher the quality higher will be the revisit intention. This result reveals that brand quality is the second major factor (major factor being brand loyalty described below) that can contribute to the growth of tourism industry in the context of Sri Lanka, which has several implications for policy making , which will be stated in the next section.

Results indicating that the relationship between image and revisit intention is insignificant ($\beta = 0.127$, $t = 1.265$) and rejected H3. It emphasis that, brand image is less important in creating the revisit intention but need to be maintain at the minimal level. With similar argument to brand awareness, this factor shows a considerable correlation with brand quality, where the practical consideration of meeting at-least some minimum standards of this aspect in practice cannot be undermined.

H4 supported by test result ($\beta = 0.694$, $p < 0.01$, $t = 7.149$) and indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between loyalty and revisit intention. ‘Brand loyalty considered as repeated purchasing behaviour under conditions of strong sensitivity’ (Kayaman & Arasli 2007). Further Baldauf, Cravens & Binder (2003) in their study of brand awareness, perceived value and brand loyalty on purchase intention found that loyal customers make purchase decision easily or pay premium price. This signify the above mentioned argument under perceived quality where even the tourist feel that the price levels are high for tourism services still they believe they get a enough value for the money they spend in Sri Lanka. Moreover, this result discovers that loyalty as the main factor which contributes to the increase of revisiting of the tourists.

Research Contribution

Contributions to Destination Marketing

In today's hyper-competitive world, achieving positive brand equity has become the ultimate dream of every marketer. Therefore, it clearly needs more attention and deeper knowledge production in the scholarly literature. We assert that our study makes an important contribution to the marketing field, especially to the brand management theory with special reference to destination branding.

This research contributes to the customer based brand equity phenomena or the demand-side perspective on destination marketing, by establishing a new understanding of how the CBBETD model may relate to the revisit intention of tourists. These theoretical relationships were studied in the context of Sri Lankan tourism sector by analysing how customer brand equity may help in creating revisit intention toward Sri Lanka. The research results support the fact that brand equity plays a major role in creating customer intention to revisit by further strengthening and extending the arguments of CBBETD model. However, the results also show that although the CBBETD brand equity model comprises four dimensions: brand loyalty, brand image, brand awareness and perceived quality, which positively affect on creating the revisit intention, these variables are in fact not equally important in creating revisit intention in different country specific contexts. In the context of Sri Lanka, this research discovers that only brand loyalty and perceived quality make a significant effect for the expected outcome of revisit intention of tourists. Subsequently, this new theoretical understanding sheds light on some significant policy implications for the future, which can improve the marketing strategies of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka towards achieving a better practical performance amidst current post-war conditions.

Contributions to Practice

In order to fulfil the ambitious policy targets assigned to it, the tourism industry in Sri Lanka must maintain a competitive position in the global area. We propose that strategic tourism destination marketing strategies should be developed from the conclusions derived from the brand identity process. It should be

considered that all of the dimensions are not necessarily need to be invested equally at the current situation in Sri Lanka in building revisit intention. Instead we suggest that a careful consideration should be given on what the primary strategic aim of destination branding is and which areas to be improved. According to the findings of this research we assert that sustaining the high quality level and high brand loyalty should be the main strategic focus in order to achieve increased revisits of tourists and consequently to achieve a high growth in this sector.

According to the findings it was noted that brand awareness and brand image are not significant variables in building the revisit intention. However, we suggest that maintaining at the minimal levels of these as still essential, due to the fact that the descriptive statistics of this research show that tourists currently rate Sri Lanka as a tourist destination which is below average on these dimensions. Findings show that Sri Lanka at the brand recognition level where customers correctly discriminate the brand as having been previously seen or heard but unable to retrieve the brand from memory. According to Aaker 1991, brand recognition is a lower level of brand awareness. At the decision making stage in order to consider the brand, brand recall ability is essential. Results of this research is consistent with the study of Bailey and Ball (2006) who stated that having a brand name alone is not a guarantee of success. It needs to be recognized as well as recall at the purchase decision making stage. This is an area which should concern more on future strategy making. This will also effect in perceived quality and image. According to study results current promotional methods are not performing well in generating information and building awareness in future, managers can use marketing efforts such as advertising, direct mail and other promotional activities in overseas countries in order to increase the awareness.

On average responders were agree with the overall quality level in Sri Lanka but extrinsic cues were highly appreciated than the intrinsic cues and this is a considerable indication which arise the need to pay more attention on intrinsic quality building since quality is significant in building revisit intention. And especially correctly identifying and maintaining the competitive advantage is important, because

responders do not see that Sri Lanka provide more benefits than other similar Asian destinations. Shifting to high spending target market need more concern on these factors.

Sri Lanka as a small island having many more to offer but has not identified what to offer for correct target markets. The findings emphasize that though Sri Lanka possesses a good overall image as a tourist destination it is not tally with the expectation of main age category of tourist who come to Sri Lanka. Chi & Qu (2008) have found that destination image affects significantly on satisfaction and the key factor to revisit a destination is past satisfaction. Further Kuo (2011) stated that higher the satisfaction stronger the revisit intention. Poor image towards a destination makes a negative effect on revisit intention. Kozak & Rimmington (2000) examined that the level of overall satisfaction with holiday experiences has a greatest impact on tourist's intention to revisit the destination.

Avenues for Further Research

We propose to enlarge the sample size, subsequently to come up with more general findings applicable to the whole population. Further adding new target groups will improve the model's generalizability (e.g. income level, gender). Furthermore, it is vital in investigating not only the phenomenon of repeat visitation but also the phenomenon of previous visitation and the frequency of past visits with reference to Sri Lanka. Moreover since the expectations may differ according to the country of origin and the culture, it would be reasonable to investigate whether the perception of the destination differs in these aspects. On the other hand future studies can be focused on analysing sub-sections of the tourism industry (e.g. budget hotel, luxury hotels, safari, adventure, entertainment) compared to this study which is conducted for the tourism industry in Sri Lanka as a whole.

Replication of the same research study under longitudinal method will generate the opportunity to understand the evaluation of Sri Lanka as a tourism destination differs over time and to understand how these theoretical relationships change under different economic conditions (e.g. war, post-war and contemporary conditions).

Since the hypothesized effect of brand awareness and brand image was not supported, it is also worth putting effort on further studies in investigating the complex interdependencies of variables, hidden variables as well as to why the tourists may have responded in such manner. Chieng & Lee (2011) mentioned that still there is no common view point emerged on the content and measurement of brand equity. Hence deeper investigations as such could also make contribution to improving the model with new dimensions and better indicators generating richer outcomes.

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