



INFLUENTIAL FACTORS ON BRAND EQUITY OF TRINCOMALEE TOURISM DESTINATION

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Abstract

Destination Marketing has converted a prevalent national strategy in the globalized world gradually, and numerous countries have recognized it as one of the critical national income originators. With Pricing Strategies, Advertisement, Publicity, and Positive Word of Mouth (WOM) are some of the best tactics to achieve competitive advantage and to sustain in the market. Therefore, this research is contributing to identifying the factors that are influencing Brand Equity in Trincomalee Tourist Destination. To accomplish the goals of this research, the data was collected from the convenience sample of 60 International Tourists in Trincomalee Division. The respondents have provided the data utilizing a close-ended questionnaire. SPSS Software is used for data analysis. The results of this study indicate that the Advertisement, Publicity and WOM have positively correlated with Brand Equity except for Price. 64.6% variation of Brand Equity can be explained by Price, Advertisement, Publicity and WOM. Further analyses reveal that the Price, Publicity, Advertisement and WOM individually indicate a high level of attribution, 42% of tourists expressed

neutral ideas regarding the safeness of Sri Lanka. This study provides outcomes that could be valuable to the Tourism Industry for strategic planning and to compete in this industry.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Tourist Destination, Price, Advertisement, Publicity and Word of Mouth

1. Introduction

Tourist Destinations are escalating all over the world, and the entry of many new destinations to the market is forcing all destinations to compete in the battle to win more tourists (Konecnik, 2002). According to Aaker (1991), forming and developing a “Brand” is one of the core-strategies of Tourist Destination Management.

Tourism has spread its parts into all the corners of the world, has graciously surfaced in Sri Lanka, formally known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean for its beauty, and wonders hidden amidst its spilling waterfalls and prospering mountains. It is enveloped by a coastal belt etched with an oceanic phenomenon, which has boosted, by the forbidding culture and history shown in the ancient miracles embraced within the island. Sri Lanka, with its diversity of natural sandy beaches, waterfalls, mountains, historical and cultural sites, is a budding Tourist Destination in the world, as mentioned by Bloomberg Travels. However out of the 1.6 billion tourists travelling the world only 2.2 million tourists have arrived in Sri Lanka in the year of 2016 (Article, Sunday, January 16, 2019/ daily FT) access date June 16 2019).

Trincomalee is one of the best natural deep-water harbors in the world, considered as the profitable hub of Sri Lanka. Trincomalee is home to the beautiful beaches of Nilaveli, Uppuveli and the off-shore Pigeon Island. Of late, Trincomalee has become popular as a whale-watching destination as well. The dive centers at Nilaveli and Uppuveli give tourists the opportunity to enjoy their holidays in diving, snorkelling and swimming. The Trincomalee District is referred to as Gokanna or Gokarna in the historical chronicles and legends. The seven hot springs at Kanniya located a mere 8km from Trincomalee interest regular crowds throughout the year Hellow@lanka.com (<https://lanka.com/about/destinations/trincomalee/> access date 2019 June 17).

2. Problem Statement & Objectives of The Study

"April 21, 2019 in the wake of Easter Sunday, an unexpected chain of critical events altered the calm and peace that we increasingly familiar ourselves to enjoy in the paradise isle of Sri Lanka for over a decade. The current terrorist attacks on the country formed a wave of chaos and hit rigid on the country's economy with the tourism industry pleasing the major blow. The horrendous cases that took place with no distrust have created a tense and troubling situation among tourists to stopover Sri Lanka, with travel warnings dispensed by several countries (Galadari Colombo GM speaks out on tourism challenges post-Easter Sunday attacks).

Not ever in the current history of Sri Lanka, were tourist hotels and foreigners embattled in terrorist attacks. The Easter Sunday attacks targeted hotels and foreigners injuring and killing them. This is a big blow to the industry which was beginning to blossom into a key economic driver of the country. It is a straight hit on the industry. Sri Lanka had the advantage of Lonely Planet naming, Sri Lanka as the best destination to travel in 2019 and was working hard to spread the set targets in terms of revenue and the number of arrivals. Unfortunately, the Easter Sunday attack has made travelers think twice. (Tourism industry will regain lost ground Anticipates Government support May 5, 2019).

One of the critical issues repeatedly highlighted by the industry is the lack of accurate data. For years, the Government has been emancipating numbers that do not differentiate between the formal and informal sectors adequately enough to understand how many foreigners are tourists, where they visit, how much they spend, and their level of expectations. Without in-depth data, policymakers cannot understand the trend the industry should take, which affects the whole value chain (Barbing for tourism, Friday, August 2018, daily FT).

Various promotional exhibitions have taken place in foreign capitals in the past, but they are not based on a master plan to promote the market destination. There is much more work that needs to be done in this area (branding for tourism, Friday, August 2018, daily FT). Even target group marketing is lacking, it's not position clearly in the international mind and the country's slogan has veered from 'Land Like

to Small Miracle to Wonder of Asia without clearly communicating the island's competitive advantage (branding for tourism, Friday, August 2018, daily FT). Marketing is one more aspect that Sri Lankans have not adequately exploited in the tourism industry. We market our country less, and the little marketing we do is mostly isolated (<http://www.ft.lk/article/609131/Redefine-and-recreate-the-Sri-Lankan-tourismbrand/> branding for tourism, Friday, August 2018, daily FT). The lack of attention can be seen to position the Sri Lanka Tourist Brand Equity. Target advertising is not done to create a brand for Sri Lankan Tourism.

There is a lack of literature in Sri Lanka to observe which factors influence mostly on Brand Equity. Furthermore, much more research was based on the same conceptual framework. There is a lack of research available in Sri Lankan context. investigate effect of price, advertising, WOM and publicity, on brand equity. Compared with previous studies, this study represents unique independent variables which are not commonly investigated by others. Thus, there exists a robust empirical gap concerning the effects of various factors on Brand Equity within the perspective of the Tourism Industry. This observed gap converts as a problem to the Tourism Industry to know whether their service is productive or not among the tourists. Indeed, there is an essential to estimate to what extent the stimulus influence on Brand Equity in the Tourism Industry. Consequently, the specific research question of this study is:

“What are the Factors that Influenced on Trincomalee Tourism Destination?”

Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to examine the role of identified factors that are influencing Brand Equity among tourists in the perspective of Trincomalee Destination. As the secondary objective, this study also focuses on recognizing the level of Price, Advertisement, Publicity, Word of Mouth and Brand Equity concerning popular Trincomalee Destination after the Ester Attack.

3. Literature Review

Brand Equity: According to Keller (2008) communicated the concept of Brand Equity centered on consumers; Brand Equity has been

demarcated as a differentiated effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses (consumer perception, preferences, and behaviour) to brand marketing activities. Brand Equity is a collection of assets and brand liabilities connected to the brand, its name and its symbol, which can increase or drop the value given by a product or service to the company or customer (Aaker, 1996).

Price: Price is a signal to designate quality Zeithaml (1988) debates that since consumers anticipate the quality of products to escalate when higher rates are charged; Price has a positive impact on purchase probability. Constructed on market principles, when reasonable provisions have been used for right quality products, consumers will pay more, and affluent products are formed.

Advertising: Advertising shows a significant role in a marketing communication to prevent Brand Equity (Cervera-T aulet, Schlesinger Yagüe-Guillen- 2013/ Gnoth-2002). Advertising is a form of swaying interface designed to form a positive attitude headed for a particular product or change positions progressively by bringing persuasive messages (Brucks, Zeithaml, Naylor -2002).

Publicity: According to Philip Kotler (2018), “Publicity is an activity to stimulate a company or its products by planning news approximately in media not paid for by the sponsor.” Publicity is mentioned as communicating with an audience by personal or non-personal media that are not explicitly paid for delivering the message.

Word of Mouth (WOM): The term word-of-mouth communication usually is used to describe verbal communications either positive or negative between groups such as the product provider, independent specialists, family, friends and real or potential consumer (Stokes and Lomax, 2002). According to Nieto et al. (2014), Consumers trust reviews submitted by other manufacturers than claims made by manufacturers or sellers of the product. E- word of mouth has become the most widely used medium for sharing ideas and reviews of various products and services available in the market.

Conceptual Framework & Hypotheses

According to Abubakar (2016), variables were hypothesized as follows in direction to analyze the role of Price, Advertisement, Publicity and

WOM that are influencing Brand Equity regarding Trincomalee Destination.

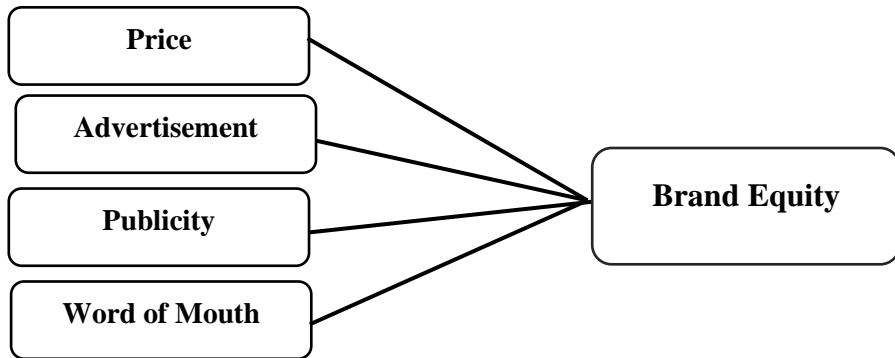


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

H1: Price is significantly influencing on Trincomalee Tourist Destination

H2: Advertising is significantly influencing on Trincomalee Tourist Destination

H3: Promotion is significantly influencing on Trincomalee Tourist Destination

H4: WOM is significantly influencing on Trincomalee Tourist Destination

4. Methodology

4.1 Data and Sampling

Primary data are collected done structured questionnaires with closed statements imperial with Likert’s scale (1-5 as strongly disagree, disagree, marginal, agree and strongly agree. Sixteen foreign tourists accused who visited Trincomalee has been identified as a sample with the use of convenient sampling technique.

Table 1: Sampling Framework

Study Setting	International Tourists who visited in Trincomalee District
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Time Horizon	Cross-Sectional Research
Unit of Analysis	Foreign Tourists who visited in Trincomalee Divisional Secretariat Division
Sample Size	60 International Tourists
Sample Method	Convenient Sampling Technique

Source: Author developed

5. Results

5.1 Analysis of Readability

Ability is the measure of getting similar results over time. Kelly (1983) has demarcated reliability as “the point to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results.” The reliability of the mechanism was measured using alpha analysis. It measures the internal uniformity (consistency) of the instrument, constructed on the average Inter-Item Correlation.

Table 02: Reliability test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.726	18

Source: Author developed

Cronbachs' Alpha coefficient varies between 0 and 1, and the cutoff point is 0.6 (Anderson, 1998). The inclusive result of Cronbachs' alpha coefficients was 0.726 for 18 statements since it is more than 0.6. A reliability test for both independent and dependent variables of the study was fulfilled, which showed that Cronbachs' alpha coefficients were beyond 0.60 for all four independent variables and dependent variables. Consequently, all items considered in this study are to be trustworthy, which suggests that the internal reliability of the mechanism was satisfactory.

5.2 Tourist Type and Purpose

Out of 60 Tourists', 6.67% of tourists are representing North America for a visit, 75% for tourists' attractions and 25% for pleasure-seeking tour. Out of 60 tourists' 6.67% tourists are representing South America for tourist attractions 75% and 25% for pleasure-seeking tours. Out of 60 tourists, 15% tourists are representing Asia for a visit will be 44.44 percent for tourist attraction, 11.11% for business tours, and 33.33% for pleasure-seeking trips, and 11.11% for Festivals and performances: Out of 60 tourists, 55% of tourists are representing Europe. For a visit will be, 66.67% for tourist attraction, 3.03% for business tours, 18.18% for pleasure-seeking tours, 9, 09% for beauty and treatment and 3.03% for festivals and performance. Out of 60 tourists' 16.67% representing Australia for the visit will be 90% for tourist attraction and 11.11% tourists for the beauty and the treatment.

Out of 60 tourists', most of the tourists' purpose is a tourist attraction. 68,7% tourists are visiting for tourist attractions, and another primary goal is pleasure-seeking tours because it indicates 18,33% representing that purpose. 6.67% of tourists' visit will be beauty and treatment, 3.33% of tourists' use is festivals and performance and 1. 67% of tourists' visit Sri Lanka for shopping and business tours.

Table 03: Cross Tabulation (Tourism Type and Purpose)

		Tourist type - Purpose Cross tabulation						To tal
		Purpose						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Tourist type	North America	3	0	0	1	0	0	4
	South	3	0	0	1	0	0	4

America								
Asia	4	0	1	3	0	1	9	
Europe	22	1	0	6	3	1	33	
Australia	9	0	0	0	1	0	10	
Total	41	1	1	11	4	2	60	

Source: Author developed

Note: [Attraction (01); Business trip (02); Transit (03); Pleasure seeking tour (04); Beauty and treatment (05); Festival and performance (06)]

5.3 Tourist Type and Motivation

Table 04: Cross Tabulation (Tourism Type and Motivation)

Tourist type Motivation Cross tabulation									
		Motivation							Total
		A *	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Ty pe	NA**	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
	SA	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
	Asia	4	2	1	1	0	1	0	9
	EU	12	0	5	4	10	0	2	33
	AUS	7	0	1	1	1	0	0	10
Total		29	4	7	6	11	1	2	60

Note*: [Know about (A); Close distance (B); Cheaper traveling cost (C); Hopping (E); Recommendation (F); Filming (G); Advertisement (H)]

Note**: [North America (NA); South America (SA); European (EU), Australia (Aus)]

According to 60 Tourists 6.67%, tourists are representing North America for the motive of the visit will be, 75% of tourists are visiting to know about Trincomalee and 25% for close distance. Out of 60 tourists' 6.67% tourists are representing South America for the motive of 75% to know about Trincomalee and 25% for close distance. Out of

60 tourists' 15% tourists representing Asia for the reason of visit will be 44.4% to know about Trincomalee 22.22% for close distance, 11.11% for cheap travelling, 11.11% for hopping and 11.11% for filming scene location. Out of 60 tourists' 55 tourists are representing Europe for the motive of the visit will be, 36.36% to know about Trincomalee, 15.15% for cheap travelling, 12.12% for hopping, 30.30% for Recommendation of friends and 6.06% for Advertisement. Out of 60 tourists 16.67% representing Australia for the motive of the visit will be 70% to know about Trincomalee, 10% cheap travelling, hopping and for a recommendation of friends. Mostly know about-Trincomalee and Recommendation of friends are high motive reasons to visit Sri Lanka. And Recommendation of friends is high motive reason to visit Sri Lanka.

5.4 View of Dependent Variable

Price, Advertisement, Publicity, WOM are the independent variables which were to study on "Influential factors on Brand Equity". The Brand Equity is assessed with four dimensions Perceived Quality, Brand Association and Brand Awareness. The dependent variable Brand Equity has a high -level characteristic of the tourist (Mean $X_5 = 5.00$ and see Table 05). Not only, but the maximum of the tourists also articulated the communal attitude regarding the variable of Brand Equity (Standard deviation = 0.50003). With single analysis, it is also illustrious that all tourists have a high-level attribute for Brand Equity. The independent variable Price is described through these dimensions as Competitive Advantage, Living Cost and Promotional Price cutting. The independent variable Price has a moderate level contribution of the tourists (Mean $X_1=3.6867$ and see Table 05). The independent variable Advertisement is evaluated through these dimensions as Proactive and Intensive Advertisement, Heavy Advertising and Positivity. The independent variable Advertisement has a moderate level attribute of the tourist (Mean $X_2= 3.3733$ and see Table 05).

Table 05: Overall Dimensions & Dependent Variables' Values

<i>Independent Variables</i>					
<i>Description</i>	Price (X ₁)	Advertiseme nt (X ₂)	Publicity (X ₃)	WOM (X ₄)	Brand Equity (X ₅)
<i>Mean</i>	3.6867	3.3733	4.0100	4.2133	3.7771
<i>Standard Deviation (SD)</i>	.82591	.70515	.54856	.55024	0.50003
<i>Minimum</i>	2.00	1.67	2.50	2.33	2.43
<i>Maximum</i>	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
<i>Decision Attribute</i>	Moderate level	Moderate	High level	High level	High level

The independent variable Publicity is evaluated through these dimensions as Social Evaluation and Memorized. The independent variable Publicity has an extraordinary (high) level attribute of the tourist (Mean X₃=4.0100 see Table 05). The independent variable WOM is evaluated through these dimensions as Internet Evaluation, Recommendation and Social Network Sites Evaluation. The independent variable WOM has High-level attribute of the tourist (Mean X₁=4.2133 and see Table 05).

Table 6 – Multiple Regression

		Pric e	Advertis ement	Publicit y	WOM
Variables & Dimensions					
Brand Equity	Correlation	.13	.558**	.558**	.441**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.364	.000	.000	.001

The correlation analysis is primarily supported out to explore the multiple relationships of Price, Advertisement, Publicity and WOM with Brand Equity if it exists. Results designate that there is statistically linear significant and positive relationship (r/Advertising =0.558, $p > 0.000$) (Publicity $r = 0.558$, $p < 0.000$) (r/WOM =0.441<0.001) between Advertisement, Publicity, WOM with Brand Equity (see Table 06). Thus, accepting Hypothesis 02, Hypothesis 03, Hypothesis 04 - i.e., Advertisement, Publicity, WOM significantly influence Brand Equity. Results express that there is statistically linear insignificant relationship between Price and Brand Equity (r/price =0.131, $p > 0.000$) (see Table-0).

Table 07: Correlation and Coefficient of Determination

R	0.805
R Square	0.648
Adjusted R Square	0.646

The "R Square" statistic designates that 64.8% of the dissimilarity in the Brand Equity is illuminated by independent variables (see in Table 07). The "Adjusted R Square" 64.8% indicates that it is a modification of the R-squared that penalizes the addition of extraneous forecasters to the model (see in Table-07)

According to this research describing the safeness of Sri Lanka 54% of tourists agree that Sri Lanka is safe for tourists after the Easter Attack. And 4% of tourists representing Sri Lanka are not a safe destination for tourists and 42% are neutral about the safety of Sri Lanka.

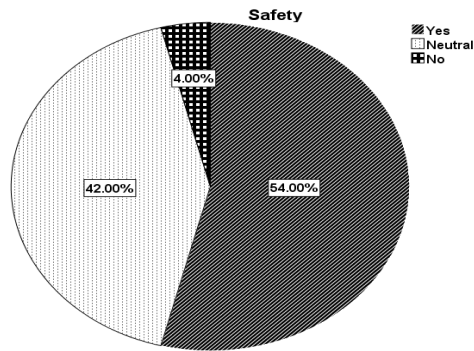


Figure-02: Safeness-Destination

6. Conclusion, Recommendation & Implication

This study endeavored to understand the dynamic branding features of a Tourism Destination. To accomplish this, it conventional a model of Brand Equity with a relationship with four influencing factors (Price, Advertising, Publicity, and Word of Mouth). The study consequently provides essential data that could be used for inaugurating a strategic branding position for fascinating tourists. The outcome of this research can be summarized as follows.

First, it can be understood that tourists from the Trincomalee had not a comparatively high sensitivity towards the Price of tourist products in Trincomalee. Thus, Price is not a minor factor for tourists to favor or visit Trincomalee. In the case of Indian passenger car market, that study noted the price premium construct is consequently important for all types of brands, despite their actual positioning within a category (Chattopadhyay, Shivani and Krishnan,2009). Compare with current study results indicating a research gap, positing that brand price was a significant clue consumers used to evaluate brand quality. (Tanmay, 2010)

The Advertisement was found to have a high impact ($r^2=55.8\%$) on Brand Equity; however, Advertisement is the most significant factor in recapping people that Trincomalee is a Tourism Destination. In the supportive way One of the major contributors to brand equity is advertising (Aaker and Biel, 1993).

Lindsay (1990) argued that the greatest source of added value is consumer perceptions of the product or brand, which came from advertising that built a brand image. Hence, as consumers are exposed to a brand's advertising more normally, they progress not only higher brand awareness and relatives but also a more positive perception of brand quality, which leads to strong brand equity (Shimp 1997).

Publicity and Brand Equity independently have high-level attributes of the tourist; the Correlation analysis discovers a positive significant linear relationship between Publicity and Brand Equity. The correlation coefficient (r) was 0.558 at the 1% level (55.80% influence on the Brand Equity).

Similarly, the correlation analysis explores a positive significant linear relationship between WOM and Brand Equity the correlation coefficient (r) was at the 0.441 at the 1% level. This indicates that there is a positive impact on Brand Equity. In the line, WOM has been found to be more pervasive under certain market conditions inclusive of evaluation of high involvement products and services. (Kapferer,1990)

Constructed on supposition some suggestions are put forward to Tourism Industry to improve the Brand Equity. Based on this research already identified what type of countries have most attracted towards Sri Lanka, and similarly, what kind of purposes have mostly influenced for selecting Trincomalee Destination. Correspondingly can recognize what has become the highest motivational reason and future can concentrate on those identified factors as well. Further, it can be used as a method of promotion by pursuing specific areas.

After the Easter attack in Sri Lanka tourists' industry was immediately collapsed, and also the trusteeship was negatively affected.

According to this research, tourist is still expressing a (42%) neutral idea regarding the safety of Sri Lanka. if the tourist who had the idea that's the Sri Lanka is a safe zone for visiting are in a neutral position; it is necessary to create that safety within the island it is much essential to safeguard that neutral idea until the tourist industry fully recovers again. This research paper will be much more beneficial for future researchers regarding the factors influencing for the next Tourism Industry, and it's to develop.

Most fundamentally the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka has been differentiating

under two situations as the before Easter Attack and after Easter attack. This research paper discussed mainly regarding the Post Easter Attack period; this will be much helpful for the researcher those who are comparing these two decades as well as to get a clear idea regarding the industry. Also, this research paper would be much essential for understanding and making decisions relevant to the reality of the industry. During the decade, soon after the Easter attack in Sri Lanka.

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